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ABSTRACT

This monograph describes the reflections of the first pilot group of teachers in the Fetzer Institute's Courage to Teach Program. A group of scholars at Richland College were the first to apply the institute's program to higher education. The essays in this collection were written by teachers and administrators who have worked together, and in solitude, to explore the inner landscape of an educator's life. Here they report on what they discovered during those explorations and how their discoveries have illumined, challenged, and changed their lives as educators. This collection of essays is divided into five sections: (1) "The Courage to Change"; (2) "Safe Space"; (3) "Deep Listening"; (4) "We Teach Who We Are"; and (5) "Under the Surface: Our Stories." Essayists and articles include: (1) "Heron-to-Gull Leadership" (Stephen K. Mittelstet); (2) "The Journey or the Destination?" (Bill Neal); (3) "Back to the Future with Savoir-Faire?" (Bettie Tully); (4) "The Symphonic Winds of Teaching" (Sara Perez-Ramos); (5) "From Neiman-Marcus to Meditation" (Mary Frances Gibbons); (6) "A Personal Journey in a Public Arena" (Barbara Corvey); (7) "Safe Space" (Sally Jackman); (8) "The 'Nocebo' Effect in Academia" (Thomas A. McLaughlin); (9) "The 'Wows' of Biology" (Adriana Cobo-Frenkel); (10) "Opening a Learning Space with Humor" (Fred Newbury); (11) "I'm in My Element" (Becki Williams); (12) "Eye of the Storm: Keeping Centered Amid Conflict" (Martha Timberlake Vines); (13) "The First Day of Class" (Sue Jones); (14) "The Courage To Listen" (Susan Barkley); (15) "Sam I Am" (Sam Tinsley); (16) "The Practice of Mindfulness" (Lee Paez); (17) "Who Are You, and What Are You Doing Here?" (Herlinda Martinez Coronado); (18) "Connections: My Student/My Self" (Kay Coder); (19) "As We Pass, We Pass Along" (Mike Miles); (20) "A Time To Grow" (Al Schroeder); (21) "Dat's Story" (Fred Martinez); (22) "Where Everybody Knows My Name" (Dru Bookout); (23) "A Stained Glass Design" (Elaine Sullivan); and (24) "The Faces of Peace" (Scott Branks del Llano). (VWC)

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To Teach with Soft Eyes

Reflections on a Teacher/Leader Formation Experience

Richland College

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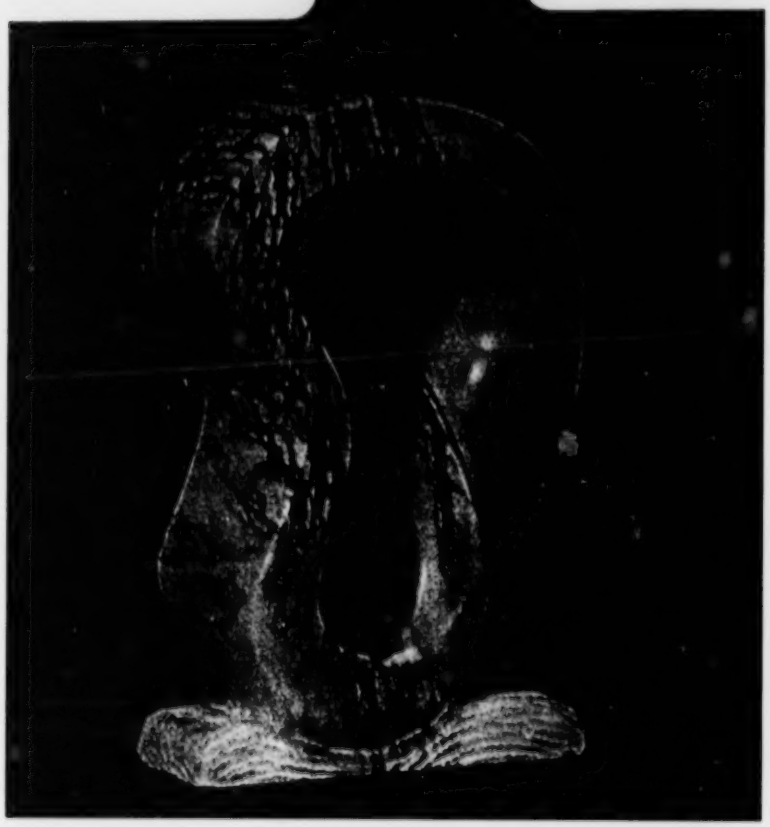

League for Innovation in the Community College
Fetzer Institute

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Cover Art

The Möbius strip incorporated in the cover art was designed and sculpted by Adriana Cobo-Frenkel, Richland College biology professor and contributing author to this publication. Adriana was inspired by her Fetzer-sponsored teacher/leader formation experience to create the sculpture from Rose of Portugal marble obtained near her studio in Pietrasanta, Italy.

The Möbius strip, named for the early 19th-century mathematician August Ferdinand Möbius who formulated it, is a continuous, one-sided surface formed by twisting one end of a rectangular strip through 180º and attaching this end to the other. With its inner side integrated with its outer side in a continuous movement, the Möbius strip symbolizes for educators the vital connection between the inner life of mind and spirit and the outer reality of a life of service to students and community.

It is the rhythm of the Möbius strip that guides the teacher/leader formation experiences described in the essays included in this publication, and which guides Richlanders daily in the course of their work and play. The individuals included in the cover art are (from left to right) Fred Martinez, Faculty Counselor, Human and Academic Development; Joyce Williams, Dean, Continuing Education; and David Canine, Vice President for Institutional Advancement–three members of the Richland College community.

Photography

John Pollock, Campus Photographer, took all photographs. All photos were taken on the Richland campus with the exception of that of Stephen K. Mittelstet, which was taken in the garden of his home.

To Teach with Soft Eyes

Reflections on a Teacher/Leader Formation Experience

Richland College
Dallas County Community College District

Rica Garcia, Editor

2000

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The League for Innovation in the Community College and Richland College of the Dallas County Community College District (TX) are indebted to the Fetzer Institute for the development of this monograph, distributed as a part of the League's Learning Initiative. More information about the Fetzer Institute and its work may be found on page 150 or at www.fetzer.org.

In memory of Pricilla Hayter-Hall,
whose strong spirit guides us

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- Our administrators-Steve Mittelstet, Elaine Sullivan, Sue Jones, Tom McLaughlin, Jackie Claunch, and Linda Coronado–who have supported the work of the faculty and made it possible for us to reach out to our students with a holistic approach which acknowledges the mental, emotional, and physical fears they must deal with in order to learn and grow
- Three Richland artists who found just the right images to support our words–John Pollock, Campus Photographer, Suzy Hogue, design of the internal format, and Pat Settlemires, cover design
- Janet James, Special Assistant to the President, who tirelessly coordinated the cover design and photographs to capture visually the spirit of our words, the writers who created them, and our campus

To the spirit of truth that supports and guides us all, we are grateful.

Fetzer Project Participants
Richland College

PREFACE

The first pilot group of teachers in the Fetzer Institute's Courage to Teach program introduced themselves in a novel way. In triads, the teachers explored the reasons they chose teaching as a profession and how those reasons were actualized in their current careers. They shared their exploration with the larger group as an introductory exercise. It was one of the most moving experiences I have witnessed in group work, as teacher after teacher expressed, often emotionally, the disconnect between working in a system and the deep caring for children or young adults that brought them to the profession. I knew then that we were on the right track with the notion of teacher formation and with the programmatic approach that has come to be called Courage to Teach.

We did not begin our work in education with the Courage to Teach approach we now call "teacher formation," but with one more traditional to foundations–of developing high quality educational materials and distributing them to schools in order to get our message across. Although this approach was successful, it did not seem to fit with the core values of the Fetzer Institute. We became more interested in considering the inner teacher and helping people get in touch with these qualities than with producing another set of curriculum materials. We wanted to find a new way of renewal that teachers–indeed, all professionals–require and to create the safe spaces in which such renewal could occur. Teacher formation is rooted in the belief that good teaching, and, in fact, all good professional practice, flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher. The process invites educators to reclaim their vocation and get back in touch with those deeper reasons that brought them into the profession.

Since the pilot, designed and facilitated by Parker Palmer, our program in teacher formation has been extended nationwide with the creation of the Center for Teacher Formation. The Center promotes and encourages programs such as the Courage to Teach for K-12 public school teachers. We have also introduced principles of formation to other professionals, and find that these principles of renewal and the return to core vocational values are as powerful in these professions as they are in teaching. The group at Richland College was one of the first to apply this process and these principles in the area of higher education. The essays that follow give testimony to the power of this work and, indeed, to the power and creativity within these teachers–a power and creativity which is, in fact, in all of us.

David Sluyter
Vice President-Education
Fetzer Institute

FOREWORD

It is an honor to introduce the reader to this book with the engaging title, *To Teach with Soft Eyes*. The essays in this thoughtful and encouraging collection were written by teachers and administrators who have worked together, and in solitude, to explore the inner landscape of an educator's life. Here they report on what they discovered during those explorations and how their discoveries have illumined, challenged, and changed their lives as educators.

You can get a quick sense of the depths to which these essays reach by scanning the section headings under which they are organized: "The Courage to Change," "Safe Space," "Deep Listening," "We Teach Who We Are," "Under the Surface: Our Stories." I find it deeply rewarding to listen in on this new conversation about teaching and learning, a conversation no longer dominated by technical language and methodological concerns, but one rooted in the problems and potentials of the human heart that shape everything we do, not least how we teach and learn.

I also find it deeply rewarding to realize what it is that motivates every one of the educators represented here: an abiding concern for the lives of the students they touch. These essays are filled with touching, sometimes gripping, stories of the students with whom they work. But equally moving and gripping is the realization that there is another story behind each of these student stories–the story of educators who have not allowed the demands of work to drain them of caring, who are willing to keep the heart alive despite the heartbreak sometimes involved in the work they do.

I think of good teachers and administrators as the culture heroes of our time, people who are asked to deal every day with the consequences of social problems that other institutions do not know how to solve, people who do so creatively and wholeheartedly despite the neglect, disdain, and even abuse they sometimes receive from the society around them. In these pages, you will meet some of our culture heroes. I have every reason to believe that you, like I, will find yourself honored to know them–and will find your own path illumined by the light of their insight and understanding.

Parker Palmer
Author of *The Courage to Teach*

Rica Garcia *teaches English and focuses on using writing to help students gain insight and clarity. She teaches a creative writing course for wellness and another in memoir. In freshman composition, Rica integrates movement, art, and music into the writing process of each student, and in literature classes, she uses poetry and writing to help students explore their lives and purposes. She teaches a special section of developmental writing for survivors of traumatic brain injury and conducts writing workshops and retreats for cancer survivors and their families. Rica is the editor of this Fetzer project monograph.*

OUR STORY

Rica Garcia

Roots of Richland's Journey to Formation

The story of our work together at Richland College culminating in this monograph begins at least five years ago with a convergence of a group of teachers and administrators of like mind and vision. Elaine Sullivan, a newly retired faculty/counselor and former director of the Adults Returning to College Resource Center, attended a roundtable in Kalamazoo, Michigan, to help conceive and write a monograph about mind-body health in the community college. As she was doing that, I was on sabbatical, researching and doing experiential work in exploring the use of writing to heal the mind-body–with the intent of offering with Elaine a creative writing course which focused on holistic health. During this time, Lee Paez, faculty/counselor, was studying biofeedback and neurofeedback.

As we were engaged in these pursuits, our president, Steve Mittelstet, always a few years ahead of everyone, was conceiving a new enrichment program at Richland that would focus on mind-body health in both the classroom and the institution. Elaine encouraged Sue Jones, physical education/psychology instructor and long time advocate of mind-body health from the Dallas district's North Lake campus, to meet with us to discuss possibilities for Richland. Tom McLaughlin, our Dean of Student Services and former physical education instructor who had originally begun the Employee Wellness Program, completed the group.

From this meeting, Sue Jones was invited to come to Richland to administer a mind-body health program at the college during a sabbatical from North Lake. Teachers who were interested in focusing a course on this theme were invited to do so, and retreats were held with interested faculty and administrators. Those retreats led to the form and shape of our current program. Sue became a permanent faculty member and coordinator of the program at Richland, Elaine agreed to facilitate staff retreats, and more classes were offered with mind-body emphasis.

But the focus of this program was not just on students and the classroom. We looked at our campus environment with wellness in mind: our need for community meeting places and more time to come together as a staff, stress-reducing activities and staff development, play and fun on the campus, and time for inner work and relaxation during each work day. At Richland we conceived the mind body

development work to extend beyond the classroom to administration and all aspects of campus life, thus we call ours a "Teacher/Leader Formation" project. Several instructors and administrators at Richland made a two-year commitment to do eight seasonal workshops of teacher/leader formation work, and others began training with Parker Palmer to become formation facilitators.

The National Teacher Formation Movement

The national *teacher formation* movement is founded on the educational reform and renewal work of Parker J. Palmer, author of *The Courage to Teach* (1998). Palmer maintains that that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher and that teaching is a vocation that requires constant renewal of mind, heart, and spirit. Teachers choose their vocation for reasons of the heart, Palmer reminds us, but the demands of teaching lead many educators to lose heart. *Formation* is a professional development approach that invites educators to reclaim their own wholeness and vocational clarity, and makes connections between the renewal of a teacher's spirit and the revitalization of education.

Under Palmer's guidance, the Fetzer Institute created the Courage to Teach (CTT) program and began piloting the teacher formation approach for teachers, administrators, and counselors in 1994. The CTT program involves the creation of an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual space in which participants can listen and respond to each other with encouragement and compassion. In the CTT program, 20 to 30 participants gather for eight retreats, once a quarter, over two years. In the retreats, the "heart of the teacher" is explored by making use of stories from participants' own journeys, reflections on their classroom practice, and insights from poets, storytellers, and various wisdom traditions. Participants are invited to speak honestly about their lives as educators, and to listen and respond to each other–and themselves–with encouragement and compassion.

The Richland Teacher/Leader Formation Project

It was in this context that the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan, became interested in a cooperative effort with Richland to support our teacher/leader formation project by sponsoring a retreat for 25 college members. In keeping with the Courage to Teach process, the plan was for our teacher formation group to go on a four-day retreat and then return to incorporate the shifts in perception we had experienced during this retreat into our work at Richland. We would

then all write a short piece for a monograph that we would create collectively to share our personal journeys and demonstrate the effects of inner exploration on our work in education. In addition, faculty participants agreed to develop a course with a mind-body emphasis to be offered the following fall, and administrators agreed to integrate the principles into some aspect of their work. The League for Innovation would publish the monograph the following year, and Barbara Corvey, from our district office, would evaluate the project.

I was invited to be the editor/writer of the monograph. We wanted to be sure that, after the retreat, the participants would have support not only in their writing, but also in maintaining and reinforcing the insights and community they had experienced, so we asked them to commit to three workshops during the spring semester, which I would facilitate.

We invited all Richland faculty and administrators to apply, and then chose 25 participants. We attempted to assemble the most diverse group possible by such factors as gender, discipline, age, race, and years of experience. Faculty representatives came from biology, chemistry, computer science, counseling, economics, English, English for speakers of other languages, math, physical education, sociology, and speech psychology. Administrators included our President, Vice President of Student Learning, Dean of Students, Director of the Mind-body Health Program, Assistant Dean and Director of the Center for Independent Study, and the Dallas County Community College District Director of Planning and Organizational Development. One counseling and human development instructor from the district's El Centro campus with a wealth of experience in diversity processes and student and organizational development applied and was included in our core formation group.

The Retreat at *Seasons*

And so we assembled in February of 1999, to travel *en masse* to Kalamazoo, Michigan, to the Fetzer Institute's retreat center, *Seasons: A Center for Renewal*. We were greeted by a beautiful natural setting and private rooms, each with its own balcony overlooking a quiet and inviting winter landscape. It seemed the staff at *Seasons* had attended to every possible need we might have so that we would be supported in doing our work. There were trails to explore in silence and beauty, healthful gourmet meals, and a setting that could not be more in harmony with nature and with our purpose, which was to attempt to connect deeply with our authentic selves.

Marianne Houston, a recently retired career teacher, took us step-by-step into deeper and deeper community and led us in our formation work. Marianne modeled for us a very strong, wise, and beautiful presence and gave each of us the feeling that we were known and cared about by her. Tom Holmes, Director of Holistic Health at Western Michigan University, led us in dance and song to open and close our circle each day. We observed silence, read poetry, shared deeply from our authentic selves, practiced deep listening, and journaled. Marianne's leadership encouraged deep, private inner work followed by sharing with small groups. At times we brainstormed as a group about what barriers to community we would have to overcome when we returned home, but our primary emphasis during the retreat was on our own inner work and on sharing the thoughts and feelings we noticed when we explored the often unattended parts of ourselves.

On our last day at *Seasons*, each participant went on a "walk about" with a colleague and talked about what we had learned and how we would bring those insights home with us. As the snow began falling for the very first time, we departed to the waving hand of Marianne, who, in mother-fashion, put us all on the bus to the airport.

Writing in Community

Before we left the Fetzer Institute, we each chose a partner to stay in close contact with when we returned home, and we committed to sharing our personal development work with the group. Using our new group name of *"Seasons,"* email flew back and forth among us during the first two weeks back: photographs of the retreat, poems of loss about not being in such safe space anymore, shared journal entries that reflected insights into our work and personal lives. New friendships began among colleagues who had known and worked with each other for over 20 years without deep connection. We felt an intimacy and closeness which only intensified in the time following the retreat, possibly because of the close contact we kept in the spring workshops and monograph drafting process.

For each workshop, we followed the format of the retreat–lighting candles to begin our work together in silence, doing our centering movement–so that these familiar rituals would help us more quickly reconnect to the experience at *Seasons*. Each workshop was as much a session of sharing, reinforcing, and reconnecting to the intimacy we had experienced while on retreat as it was a session of support with the writing task.

Writing the monograph brought us even closer as we brainstormed, focused, and read drafts for each other about bringing mind-body health and the concepts of deep listening, safe space, and teaching from the authentic self into our various work situations. We shared stories of reentry into our busy lives, supported and helped each other as we struggled to get our deepest thoughts down in 1,800 words or less, and laughed, played, and enjoyed just being with people who knew who we were and liked us that way.

During the first workshop, we focused on the writing process. I encouraged everyone to continue using journaling to explore his or her inner world before deciding what to focus on for the monograph. We talked about writing strategies that would facilitate deep inner exploration and the fears we had about writing–where they came from and what we could do to get past them. We agreed to continue the work we had begun at *Seasons* until our next full-group workshop in March, and we formed smaller "home groups" for weekly meetings in the meantime.

Our second time as a group together–the March workshop–was spent planning the monograph: focusing on our readers and who they were, choosing a tone for our work, and thinking about what would and would not work with this audience. Then we met with our home groups to focus our individual pieces. Between eating and talking on a spring Sunday afternoon at our president's home, we did our work and enjoyed spending time with colleagues who had become friends.

In April, our third workshop focused on giving and receiving feedback. We did not read one another's drafts, but, instead, the group learned how to give feedback in such a way that it could be heard and how to receive it with equanimity. We formed new collaboration groups of five, this time based on Myers-Briggs personality types, so that those with opposing strengths could help each other see in their drafts what they could not see on their own.

Since it was a new experience for many to share unfinished work with colleagues, there was some anxiety and fear at this workshop. But the process was one that acquainted teachers and administrators with the model of writing that we teach at Richland–going in first to explore ideas privately, coming out to focus for the reader, drafting, collaborating, revising, and only at the end, editing. During the spring, I had the opportunity to read each participant's draft and give feedback while the writing was in process. The work was thus conceived and drafted collaboratively in our *Seasons* community.

The last phase of the writing process occurred during the summer when I edited the writings, sent them back to the writers, received their feedback, made final corrections, and grouped and organized the manuscript. Mickey Olivanti from the Fetzer Institute then read and edited the full manuscript one more time, giving it an important external eye.

One more step remained. We decided to photograph each of the writers at various locations around the Richland campus–the meditation garden, the lake our campus is built around, the outside classrooms–to capture the healing nature of our physical setting as well as the spirit of each of the writers.

In the fall semester of 1999, we met once more as a full group to close our circle and celebrate both the process and the product of our time together. We sat in our *Seasons* circle and passed the manuscript from person to person, as participants added their parts to it and spoke about the meaning of the project to their personal and professional lives. We gathered at the ranch of Bill Neal, one of our group members, and shared food and laughter and tears, this time in an autumn setting–once again in nature.

Passing the Torch

My work as the editor/writer of this project is now complete, and no experience in my professional life has held so much meaning and challenge for me. I have always chosen to work quietly in the classroom, afraid that if anyone actually knew what I was doing, they would make me stop. It has been an important step for me to let my way of being with students be known by my colleagues as I assumed a teacher/learner role with them. I could not have worked with a more receptive and accepting audience, and I know that not all faculty and administrators will be so open, but I also now know that teaching teachers is no different than teaching anyone.

This kind of work has a way of continuing. Teachers from our group are introducing new kinds of activities and assignments in their classes and are interacting with students in more mindful ways; administrators are listening more intently. We simply are not the same people who traveled to Michigan together last winter.

The act of going on retreat and then writing in community has been a powerful experience that has forced us to take time to make connections and think deeply about our lives as professionals and human beings. Where this project will end is not clear. It was our intent to become better educators, to grow personally, and to share what we

learned. The first two goals are under way, and the publication of this monograph marks the beginning of our commitment to share our insights with others.

The truths we discovered within ourselves at the Fetzer Institute will be passed on in many ways, and it is our hope that in our writings, we can now support and encourage other teachers and administrators to teach with soft eyes.

❦

Dedicated to my best friend, teacher, and husband, Ed Garcia.

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THE COURAGE TO CHANGE

Change is never easy. Usually it is thrust upon us, but in the case of the group going to the Fetzer Institute, it was a conscious decision to explore our inner worlds with the hope that change in our personal and professional lives would be the result. The effects of that inward search have been profound-for some subtle, for others dramatic, but for all of us, a shift.

It takes courage to quiet down long enough to explore the forces that are driving us, but that is exactly what we did, and the following stories show some of the results of that inquiry.

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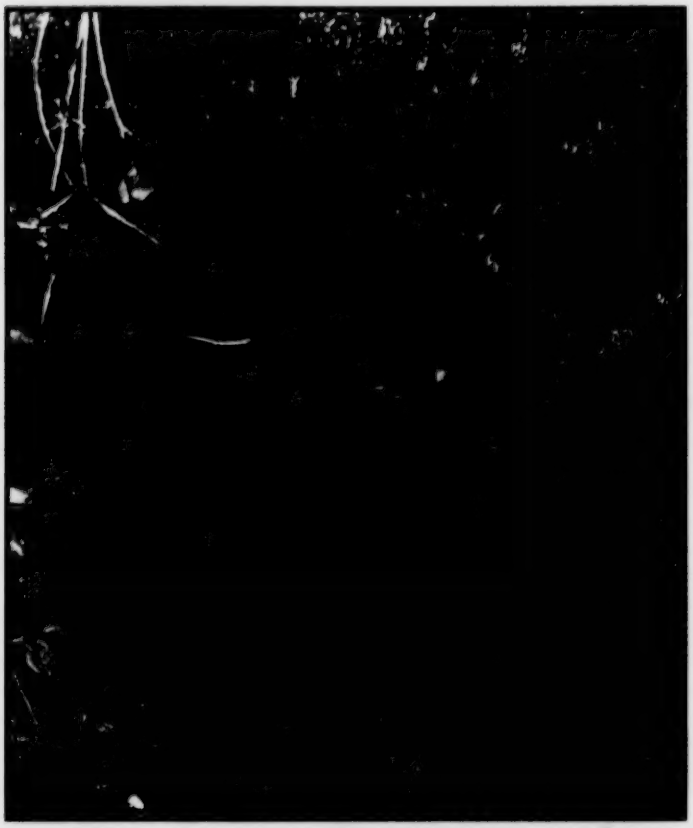


Stephen K. Mittelstet *began his community college leadership career in 1972 at the opening of Richland College, where he has served as president since 1979. He first learned of Parker Palmer's work in 1981 with the publication of Palmer's* The Company of Strangers. *Palmer and his subsequent presentations and publications, including* The Courage to Teach, *have strongly influenced Steve's leadership, and thus, the working, playing, and learning climate at Richland College.*

HERON-TO-GULL LEADERSHIP

Stephen K. Mittelstet

First day home from Fetzer
Journal entry
February 8, 1999

Signs of a dangerously premature spring are everywhere! Daffodil yellow peeks through translucent green stem tips; fat oak buds swell; grainy elm seeds dangle in droops; lily blades slice through crimson, rose, and salmon-hued cyclamen.

And it's only the first week of February! I worry about my precocious garden, even as I delight in its eagerness.

Down the hill, beneath the naked bois d'arc trees, I unlock the gate to the secrets of my private wildlife garden.

I see none of the wildlife I've earlier befriended scurrying beneath ground-clinging fog this morning. But, working my way through the underbrush, I know they are there. I hear their sporadic rustles, and I see their burrows, their paths. Here, I see a decaying pineapple top, there a cleanly picked turkey breast bone–evidence that my nightly tossing of dinner leftovers into the wildlife garden has been well-received once again.

At path's end, the creek is low and flowing clear, the view intermittently marred by reminders of my thoughtless human brethren upstream: shredded plastic bags, newspaper, a rotting sneaker, all having snagged on low-hanging limbs from earlier flash floods. On another day I'll perform one of my futile clean-up rituals.

On the chalk bluff overlooking the creek, I carefully unwind six strong honeysuckle tendrils attempting to overtake my youthful juniper–harming neither–as I have been doing regularly during the last three years of the juniper's young life. Together, eventually, we'll soar above the wild honeysuckle, whose energies I now direct to the underbrush, down the slope, and into the creek.

A sudden rustle upstream just beyond the bend breaks my concentration. Is someone exploring the creek so early this Monday morning?

No–it's the wings of our resident blue heron, gracefully lifting himself above the bud-studded trees into the now cloudless sky. He glides west, beyond my range, then reappears in my narrow bluffview line-of-sight, coasting higher and northerly, disappearing beyond neighborhood chimneys. I await his southeasterly return. But, in his place, a lower-coursing herring gull appears, as if with the heron's baton. The gull flaps briskly off to the east.

This surprise exchange startles me into an outer awareness of my pending work day as president of Richland College. It is now my turn with the baton, and I must head off north . . . to my family of teacher-learners and our sacred calling of teaching, learning, and community building.

I give thanks to my garden for launching my day from a place of inner peace. I am blessed.

Throughout the rest of that busy, productive day, in and out of meetings, in and out of email, returning calls, freeway-flying–I pondered how I might pass on that peace-induced baton to colleagues through my daily interactions with them, a baton connecting their busy daily agendas to some inner peace, as the heron-gull exchange had done for me.

Parker Palmer discusses the living paradox of action and contemplation in his work entitled *The Active Life*. He suggests that we might better speak of and strive for "contemplation-and-action"–a necessarily integrated concept rooted in "our ceaseless drive to be fully alive."

By 6:30 that evening, I had an idea. Hopping from one import and craft store to another, I purchased several brightly colored paper strips, three candle holders of varying heights and designs, a disposable candle lighter, and three white columnar candles in preparation for the next morning's weekly President's Cabinet meeting.

As the 14 cabinet members began arriving that morning, they were greeted with a colorful, candle-lit centerpiece. The gathering was festive, as usual, with participants regaling one another with stories of the weekend. When it came time to convene, rather than plunging right into the pre-circulated agenda, I took time out to explain that the centerpiece–with the three candles representing mind, body, and spirit, connected by the colorful Möbius strips, which move inalterably from their inner-side to their outer-side, just as we, at our most authentic, do as well–was designed to help us bring our fully focused, authentic selves to engage in the action items before us.

I then asked everyone to take a few moments in silence to focus on the candle flames and consider our purpose for being there–our students and their learning and the service we provide our communities–as well as to remember colleagues who might need our special support, due to illness, loss, or other difficult challenges.

After cabinet members mentioned names of several colleagues in need of our support, we spent about three minutes in silence, focusing on them and on our students' success.

The time of focus enriched the thoughtful and spirited agenda-related conversations that followed. At the end of the meeting, members expressed delight with the opening ceremony and asked that it continue as part of our weekly ritual.

. . . one pass of the baton . . .

Although my original intent was to gather up the centerpiece and have it returned weekly, members suggested that it remain in the conference room to be used by the many other groups which meet throughout the week in that space. Later that afternoon a formal invitation was posted on the conference room door:

AN INVITATION TO FOCUS

As you enter this space, you are invited to engage fully your mind-body-spirit in teaching, learning, and community building.

You may wish to light the candles and take a few moments of silence

- to leave behind distractions
- to focus on
  - helping our students succeed
  - serving our community
  - supporting our colleagues who are ill, have suffered loss, or are otherwise facing difficult challenges

Then, please proceed to convene on your agenda items thoughtfully, sensitively, and joyfully, letting the candles help you maintain focus.

. . . another pass of the baton . . .

The invitation continues to be accepted by many of the groups that meet in the conference room, now with fewer surprised reactions than in the beginning. For President's Cabinet members, the ritual was immediately a welcome opportunity for focus and has continued to be. Some members of other groups, however, were somewhat startled at first. One supervisor, anticipating the traditionally contentious meeting over schedule building, invited her group to light the candles and start the meeting in focused silence. As the meeting adjourned, a couple of participants observed, with raised eyebrows, "Did you find that a little weird? Kind of like prayer?" Others responded, "But did you notice how uncharacteristically well everyone seemed to behave? How quickly we came to consensus? And how soon we accomplished our business? A little reflective focus sure works for me!" The group continues to use the ritual, and no one seems to mind now.

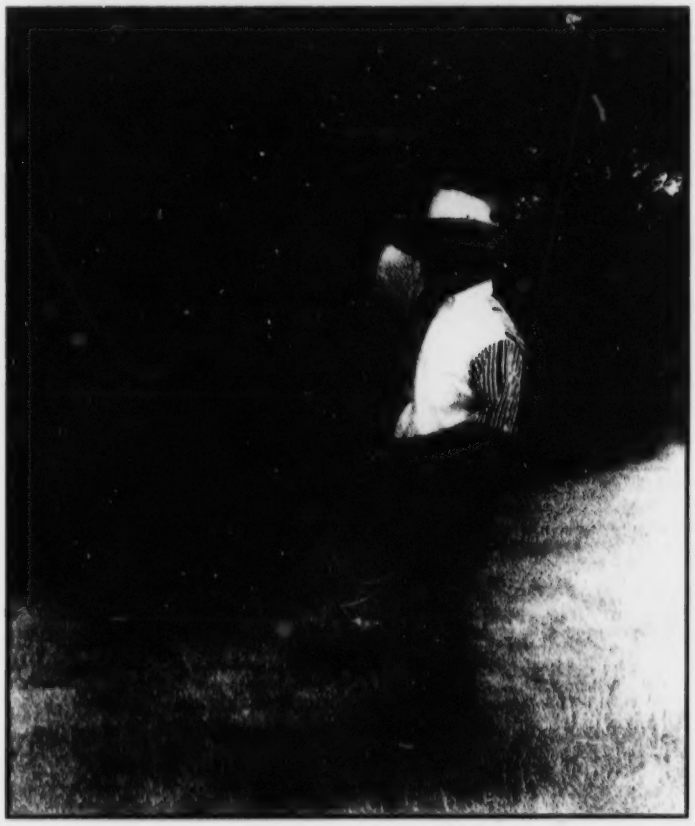
As people participate in meetings using this format, as they read minutes from these meetings, as they communicate about colleagues needing our support, or as they talk about the phenomenon through the grapevine, organizational values of caring and student focus are being reinforced in numerous ways.

. . . a growing number of baton passes . . .

Parker Palmer says that being fully alive is acting in a way that "involves expression, discovery, re-formation of ourselves and our world. As we act, we not only express what is in us and help give shape to the world, we also receive what is outside us, and we reshape our inner selves. When we act, the world acts back, and we and the world are re-created."

As a leader, I cannot predict what I will discover when I take time to reflect, to look inside–like seeing a heron pass a baton to a gull. I have learned, however, that "contemplation-and-action" is more likely than either contemplation alone or action alone to yield behavior that is authentic to who I am. And when I am more fully alive in that respect, my colleagues and our students are the beneficiaries.

. . . baton passing without end . . .



***Bill Neal** teaches weight training and physical fitness classes and has coached many sports. His psychological interest in sports activities has drawn him to a variety of mind-body health applications. Incorporating human development exercises into his classes, he is able to give his students a more thorough understanding of their lives. A major part of Bill's teaching now includes an extensive Emeritus Fitness Program for seniors, as well as a program in the summer for children who do not think of themselves as athletes.*

THE JOURNEY OR THE DESTINATION?
Bill Neal

In my life, mornings come far too early and the chores of country life on my ranch precede the normal "rising in the morning" activities that we all go through. At times I have felt burdened by my obligations, and I plead guilty to focusing on the completion of the task rather than the experience it affords me. But recently I've been pondering which is more important, the destination or the journey, the product or the process? A journal entry written a few weeks after my Fetzer experience reveals the beginning of a shift in my thinking:

The alarm clock startles the silence of a peaceful night's rest at 5:30 a.m. As I stumble through the darkness searching for clothes and glasses, it seems too short a night. Falling out of the back door with boots unlaced, I find myself greeted by three excited, frolicking dogs eager to accompany me. With flashlight in hand, I head for the barn, stopping at the corral to check on a pregnant cow about to calve, her swollen udder signaling me of the impending delivery. The cycle of the moon is not cooperating; she is still pregnant.

Passing the corral and opening the noisy back gate to the pasture, I am greeted by 15 pairs of neon-like eyes, the cows' black coats blend in with the darkness. Awakening at the sound of my closing the back door of the house, they have traveled up from the woods where they spent the night.

Two cats, their abstract silhouettes darting through the stillness, beckon the dogs to half-hearted pursuit.

As I near the barn, I can hear the hoof beats of three horses racing toward the barn from three separate pastures. They were called to feeding by the sound of pelleted feed raining into plastic buckets. Their heads peer over fence lines, framed by clouds of warm breath pouring from their nostrils. A last shrill call of a distant coyote signals wildlife that the night hunt is over.

All critters fed, I can feel my deep sigh of relief as I finish this morning chore. Closing gates behind me, I head for the house. The faint glimmer of the light in the kitchen, smells of morning coffee, and my body begins to awaken fully.

By now the distant horizon has painted the first sign of light, and the reflection of its subtle softness dances on the water of the stock tank outside the house. The background of trees provides a backdrop as a fish breaks the surface of the water chasing its breakfast.

Now awake and mounting the backstairs, one last look at "farm life at dawn" reminds me how lucky I am.

My career in teaching and coaching, as well as my life, has been built on focus, structure, and organization. As a result, I have been successful both in the classroom and on the field. However, I am coming to realize that once I have completed a task or accomplished a goal, another challenge always awaits me, so my work is never done. I have a seemingly endless list of things to complete. Sometimes it's a fence to build; other times it's a pasture to mow, wire to mend, or another class lecture to prepare. What I have to show for my effort is the completion itself, but now I'm wondering what happened to the experience or the process? Did I take time to enjoy it? Was it fun? What did I learn?

To be fair to myself, I know that in spite of my work ethic, I have a largely humanistic approach to learning. As I integrate human development exercises into my teaching and share personal stories, my students see a realistic side of both me and my classroom. Still, I feel that I need to address my tendency to hasten task completion and more emphatically experience the process. For example, I want to make more of an effort to dialogue with students before roll call and assess their mental and physical states. In this way I can more appropriately select activities or make adjustments to the routine I have planned. This focus and attention on the students before class gives me time to encourage those in need, and praise others who are deserving.

Talking with a married student, I learn that her children are suffering from allergy problems, she is running her husband's business from home on a computer, and her car is on its last leg. Another student is working full time, taking care of an ailing father, and worrying that his student loan has not yet cleared. A third student has cancer, receives radiation treatments, and yet volunteers at the local YMCA. Suddenly, the product or completion of the course I'm teaching seems less important. The process of what these students are experiencing informs me how I can best help each of them.

See me. Watch me. Who am I?
Just another body to be exercised
Among many others who gather here
To work and sweat and be supervised?

I'd rather you knew my name
And my personal goals and desires,
To be aware of the days I am sore
And when my body tires.

Students need from me more than an exercise program; they need attention and care to who they are, and to give them that, I must first pay attention to who I am.

My life at this time is full and varied. Family, career, personal endeavors, and lifelong pursuits are all showering upon me. As I go through my days now, I am making a real effort to enjoy all the pleasures that accompany each of the special moments.

I find so much joy in my sons' journeys of growing up and in sharing in their activities of weight training, football, basketball, baseball, and track. I have a golden opportunity to help train them, to live the high moments and the failures with them, and I intend to pay attention to the experiences along the way.

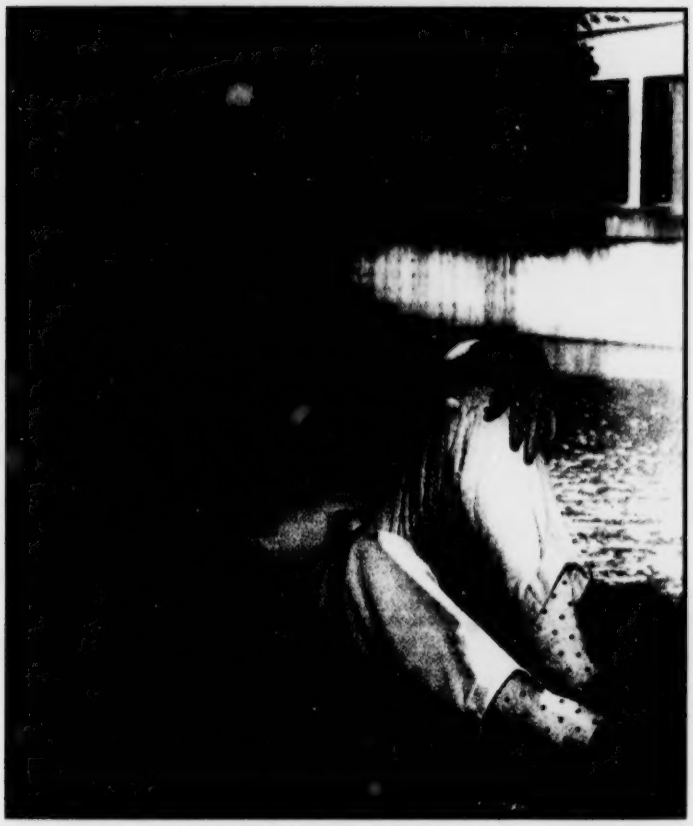
My opportunity to see the sun rise, to enjoy the company of the animals, and to take pleasure in the ranch chores are also my priorities now. I have ceased to think of my life as a series of deadlines, but rather processes extending into the future. My dogs, once a nuisance, now remind me that I am a lucky man who has a countryside for a residence.

Dogs beckon playfully outside,
Tails thumping against the door
Calling me to join with them
In pursing wooded lore.

We only want to run with you
Through woods and meadow plush;
To roundup cattle and horses chase
And birds in tall grass, flush.

Take time, we plead, to stop and see,
What wondrous sights and sounds
We'll find, if you but come with us
To Mother Nature's vast playground.

My Fetzer experience has allowed me to slow down and to see my workload as an opportunity and my chore list as a privilege. Sunsets are now beautiful reminders of what I have been fortunate to experience that day rather than signals that I am running out of time to complete my chores. My garden has become a flower arrangement rather than a patch to weed and tend. The tasks before me each day now remind me that we are all just passing through this life. We can choose to see it and enjoy it, or we can simply organize it.



Bettie Tully *is a professor of counseling and human development and coordinator of the Urban Education Program at El Centro College, also in the Dallas County Community College District. During her career with the district, Bettie has served as vice-president of student development and college ombudsperson at El Centro, as well as developer and coordinator of Process and Diversity Consultant Program for the district. The theme of her teaching, counseling, and organizational work has consistently been one of helping students and staff learn to better care for themselves and others.*

BACK TO THE FUTURE WITH SAVOIR-FAIRE?

Bettie Tully

As coordinator and lead professor for the Urban Education Program at El Centro College, I finally had the chance in my Multicultural Education course to pursue the grandiose fantasy that I, unlike other dedicated professional educators, knew the secret of how to prepare student teachers who would make a real difference in their future classrooms. As the semester progressed, I was shocked to discover that my students were not necessarily enchanted with our brand new competency-based textbooks and not even slightly turned on by the challenge of writing learning objectives. These students who professed to be future teachers were reacting no differently than any other group of students who were forced to take a required course. It was even more disappointing to realize that my role as teacher par excellence had not materialized. These students showed no interest at all in me or my many years of teaching.

My mind reeled with questions. Why was I no longer able to convey my passion for teaching and learning? What had happened to diminish my authenticity as a teacher? Was I afraid of being criticized for being a human potential relic of the seventies? I began to feel nostalgia for the old days, when my teaching/counseling vocation clearly rested on humanistic education principles, and I had the courage to act on my belief that good teachers teach who they are more than what they know.

In desperate need of solace, I picked up Parker Palmer's book, *The Courage to Teach*, which I had read some months earlier but brushed off as one man's futile attempt to revive the spirit of dispirited educators. As I reread, reconsidered, and talked about Palmer's writing with some colleagues, I began to feel the faint reawakening of my old soul, and even a glimmer of hope that better things could lie ahead for my students and me. So when I heard about the Richland College/Fetzer Institute project, I knew this was the group I needed to be with at this time in my teaching life, and fortunately, they welcomed me with open arms.

What my colleagues and I experienced at the Fetzer Institute was the only serious attempt that I know about to uncover and address the notorious "hidden curriculum" described in education textbooks as a dark shadow to be monitored, but never defined or addressed as a reality of the classroom environment. At Fetzer, on the other hand, we were making the hidden curriculum overt, choosing and celebrating

the intentionality of our attitudes, language, and behaviors as ways of enhancing the teaching/learning process.

As I felt our facilitator, Marianne Houston, immerse herself in us and our intuitional self-direction, adapting her leadership style to us and doing it with such grace and excitement, my whole body breathed a huge sigh of relief. It was as if I received permission to be myself as a teacher and to regain my faith in the natural process of "safe community." I renewed my acquaintance with quiet and solitude and the pleasure of community rituals–dancing, silence, the magic of circles. Our brief but intense retreat helped me to begin reclaiming who I am and to use my SELF once again as the medium to reach my students.

As I continued to reflect on how I would fit my experience into the class agenda on my trip home, it dawned on me that having Marianne as a teacher/model accounted only partially for my transformed perspective. Without my own full involvement and my colleagues as co-conspirators, my learning would have been minimal. I knew then that my teachers-in-training would have to experience that difference directly and experientially. A trickle-down theory of teacher formation would be much too slow and too impersonal to have significant impact. I resolved to take the risk of inviting my students to be part of an in-class formation experience when I got back to Dallas.

When I returned to my students, I described my experience with teacher formation to them and my decision to do a midcourse correction. I did not see us abandoning our original course objective of learning how to assure that our classrooms affirmed self-esteem, empathy, and equity for all students, but I wanted us to experiment with a more open experiential approach. So I asked my students to reach consensus on one significant learning experience from earlier in the course (wondering all the while if one really had occurred) that would serve as a connection and common thread to our current quest.

The students decided that the work we had done on learning how to question should become that thread. We had studied and practiced asking open-ended questions, fulfillment questions, curiosity questions, critical thinking questions, but they chose the questions derived from a Basque tradition that honors inspiration, surprise, challenge, and love. The Basque people refer to these questions as the "Rivers of Life": *When today was I inspired by someone? When was I surprised? When did I find myself challenged to think in new ways? When was I deeply moved?*

The new assignment was for students to select a hero from their ethnic or racial group, study that hero's life story and be able to assume his/her identity for the purpose of presenting the hero's story in first

person. The assignment for audience members was to listen fully, with empathy and curiosity, and to keep personal notes on the responses to the "Rivers of Life" questions following each story. From that point on, we would go wherever our hearts and minds led us with no lesson plans or course outlines.

One student selected Jackie Robinson as his hero. As Jackie, he spoke movingly of the experience of being the first black man to penetrate the world of America's traditional white-male pastime. Another student chose Gloria Estefan, and told of the exhilaration and weariness of a modern day singer whose original and inspiring music led Cubanos and others to assert and protect their human and civil rights. A young single mother assumed the role of Cesar Chavez, describing the regret Cesar felt at leaving his family behind as he continued the nonviolent crusade for farm workers' rights. Twelve other students presented similarly compelling portraits.

As we began reviewing our responses to the questions that honor inspiration, surprise, challenge, and love, we began to know one another in much more profound ways. Almost all of us were surprised by the similarities of our "surprise" responses. These had to do with the physical toll experienced by our heroes and the important role that music played in each hero's story. We decided to explore the impact of music in our own causes and crusades and how it affected our self-discovery processes as teachers.

We decided to hold a group discussion (salon style) maintaining our hero roles, focusing on the impact of music in our lives. Cesar spoke of "De Colores," the Cursillo Movement spirit song, and its contribution to solidarity. Jackie told about his feelings of isolation and anxiety in the midst of a stadium filled with a largely white group of baseball fans singing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." Gloria described the thrill of singing an original song dedicated to the Cuban people, while an audience of 50,000 fans joined in on the chorus. Then we assumed our own identities again, personalizing the impact of music in our lives.

The students shared experiences where music had moved them deeply, which led to a brainstorming session of how to use music in an elementary classroom in ways that would help students feel safe, experience community, and be inspired. Someone brought up how difficult it is to remain seated while music is playing, when every physical and emotional impulse says to get up and dance and how a safe classroom might encourage children to create and perform their own dances. We brought personal music selections and took turns choreographing our own versions of teacher/student dances.

The obvious importance of using movement to enhance learning inspired me to lead the students through an exercise where partners take turns physically mirroring each other's movements, striving to communicate and develop empathy and synchronicity. Another student remembered a Tai-Chi lesson where aggressive, defensive, and assertive postures were modeled. To her surprise, having previously declared herself to be the shy one, she found herself volunteering to take the class through the exercise, concluding with a conversation about the wisdom of teachers who follow the martial arts maxim: "Expect nothing, but be ready for anything."

We went back again to music and the questions we raised earlier in the semester about Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which now they understood having experienced it in our class. At this point, a class member said, "Wow! Isn't it amazing how we have come full circle and are back to the objectives of multicultural education." Then, of course, as students will do after verbalizing a profound insight, she self-deprecatingly said, "See, Dr. Tully, what happens when you follow our lead? We wind up going in circles!" All I could say was, "Yes, indeed, magic circles that embrace us and empower us to create new and greater circles."

As we reluctantly concluded our experiment, the students thoughtfully expressed their gratitude to one another and resolved to continue this process for the remainder of their time together. They also expressed fascination with the teacher formation concept and promised themselves to explore it further. When they asked me what I had liked, I found myself trying to explain to them, that on a personal level, I too had come full circle. By participating in the Fetzer retreat with my Richland friends and then becoming a mutual learner with my students, I was able to grow back to the future–back to the best of my old learnings, reframing and moving them forward with new perspectives and fresh insights. The teacher formation experience helped me to free myself to rediscover the beauty and power of being an authentic teacher who might once again be able to co-create the magical student/teacher dance of learning.

Sara Perez-Ramos *has been teaching general biology, botany, and general chemistry at Richland College for 10 years. Paradoxically, she has always been interested in those aspects of life that are not traditionally viewed in the realm of science: the nature of feelings, the existence of the spirit and of life beyond what is currently understood. Students know Sara for her use of music as a relaxation tool in the science laboratories. In her future classes, she plans to incorporate mind-body health concepts by exposing students to philosophical, historical, and scientific connections between mind and body.*

THE SYMPHONIC WINDS OF TEACHING

Sara Perez-Ramos

Truth is symphonic.
-Hans Urs von Balthasar

The day after I arrived home from the teacher formation workshop at the Fetzer Institute in Michigan, I decided to become a student. I joined the Symphonic Winds band of our college and tried to play the flute after 20 years. I had put away music earlier in my life because of my fear of performing and immersed myself in the world of science. But after Fetzer, I felt the need to experience again what it is like to be a student and found the courage to return to the world of music. As a teacher, I had the sudden fear that, without realizing it, ten years of lecturing, writing tests and administrative reports, and grading thousands of papers had made me forget what it is like to be on the other side of the podium.

The first day with the band I was eager to learn and play music, but it was a complete fiasco. I thought that making music was a matter of picking up the instrument and reading the printed symbols in front of me. I know very well now what it feels like when the spirit is ready, but the body is not! (Just as scared adults returning to college or students with poor academic preparation must feel in my classroom.)

So what was I to do? My initial reaction was to run away as fast as I could, hoping that no one would ever remember that I had even tried a comeback. I started to reason with myself: *I really don't have to do this . . . I could tell the maestro that I had changed my mind . . . or I could say that the music the band was playing was not to my liking and that I would go and play my own music alone . . . or I could say that the maestro's conducting style was not compatible with my playing style.* Somehow, I couldn't do any of these. There was some kind of magic glue that made me stay there. So every Monday and Friday, I kept marching toward the band hall to try to make some music.

I have been thinking about what kept me going there–what is the nature of that magic glue that made me continue trying and trying? If I could figure it out, perhaps I could help my students keep coming to class instead of finding excuses not to go and deciding to drop.

One of the things that helped me was the feeling that the band hall was a safe space and a thriving community. I was really lost at the beginning, and I was embarrassed; other people would hear me play the wrong note at the wrong time, and I felt humiliated when this

actually happened. Thinking about this, I wonder about how my students feel in my biology and chemistry classrooms. Are they as nervous and eager to play as I was? Do they feel embarrassed when I ask a question about the material that I have just presented, and they give a totally wrong answer, one that has nothing to do with the question I raised? What conditions create a safe place?

Looking back at how I survived those first days, I see that even though my own courage was part of the "sticking to it," I also succeeded thanks to the help of those around me. For example, the formal but patient maestro would simply smile or laugh when there was a serious mistake or when we were so lost that we could not even play a note. I know that there is a difficult-to-master line between laughing with you and laughing at you, but he seemed to find it every time.

In another case, a student would tell me how to do something: "Hey, this trill is done this way," or "That is B natural, not B flat." Sometimes all of us–not just me!–would be lost, and as selfish as it sounds, that felt reassuring. All those things contributed to making me feel comfortable about being there: my own eagerness to play, the compassion, patience, and presence of the maestro, and cooperatively and collaboratively learning with the other students.

During my time with the band, I have done a lot of thinking about the parallels of making music and teaching and learning. Parker Palmer talks about the importance of silence in creating a safe space. In music, silence is paradoxically an important component. Sometimes an instrument carries the melody but becomes silent for many bars and that is the time for other instruments to bring in the melody in a different form. And so it is in any classroom with the music of learning: a student raises a question, then another adds to that based on something she saw on the Discovery Channel, and there I am, the maestro with the baton, making sure that the music of knowledge and learning is flowing.

Another paradox that we explored in the teacher formation workshop is the creation of a pedagogical space that is open but within bounds. In music, the time signature of a score changes sometimes from 4/4 to 3/4. I learned that the composer does that to better adjust the accents and tempo of the music he or she is composing. In teaching, I find myself changing the tempo and accentuation now and then, in an attempt to better present the particular material I want the students to learn. Difficult material may require accentuation in every other class session, while other topics may wait until a third class for the next

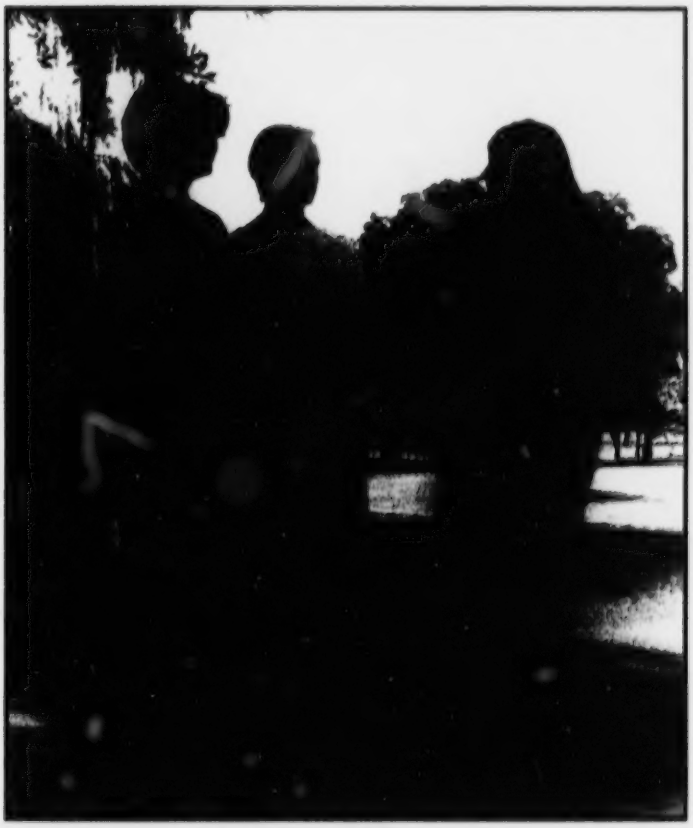
accent. Also related to this is the overall tempo of a musical score. In a symphony, there are whole movements that are played slowly while others go much faster. I realize that as a teacher, I have my own larghetto days–or weeks–when I really feel the need to take it slowly, and others in which I am nothing else but allegretto and can teach a whole chapter in one class. I know that students also go through these cycles, and I wonder if it is possible to make music when the teacher's tempo and that of the student are not synchronized. For that, I have no answer.

In my musical adventure, I have also learned that there are some music scores that are not necessarily melodic or harmonically stimulating to everyone. Some have melodies that you can actually sing in the shower, whereas others just leave you impressed in terms of their technical difficulty and sound, but with no particular melody. One is not necessarily better than the other; they are just different forms of music. In academia, I see that there are some courses that I recall because of some "melody" they left me with, while others I remember because they gave me a sense of awe and uncertainty about life and its complexities. One is not necessarily better than the other; they are different forms of teaching and learning. This realization was important to me because many students do not view science courses as melodic.

Overall, I realize that the Fetzer experience gave me the initial courage to claim a part of me that had been put away out of fear: my love of music. It also gave me the idea to experience something old–being a student. This experience has opened my eyes to a world in which teaching and making music are analogous. Most important, it has brought me to the realization that in the classroom, though I am the one with the baton, I am not the only one making the music.

❦

Dedicated to Chuck Mandernach, my dear maestro.



Mary Frances Gibbons *(center) teaches English in the Mind-Body Health Program at Richland College. She also teaches Technical Writing and telecourse distance-learning English classes. She enjoys teaching writing classes in the computer lab because she likes to work with students in a hands-on setting. Mary Frances incorporates many of the mind-body health principles in all of her classes and recognizes the value of writing as a means of gaining insight and clarity in our lives. Her personal meditation practice includes early morning journaling and reading.*

FROM NEIMAN-MARCUS TO MEDITATION

Mary Frances Gibbons

Question: *What is the longest 18 inches in the world?*
Answer: *The distance from our heads to our hearts (or the distance from Neiman-Marcus to meditation).*

Background

As an only child and a former beauty contestant, I was always concerned with rules and appearances and what other people thought of me. The opinions of others were much more important to me than my opinion of myself. Nonetheless, if you had asked me, I would have told you that I was very much in touch with myself and knew who I was. When I read Parker Palmer's *The Courage to Teach* and attended the retreat at the Fetzer Institute, I realized I had not been nearly as self-aware as I thought. Fortunately, I have found truth in the maxim that when the student is ready to learn, the teacher will appear. I found myself ready for my lesson from Palmer's message to "teach who you are–*your* authentic self."

Embracing this message meant that I needed to find out who I am. I began to realize some things about myself that carried over into both my personal and professional lives.

Life Changes

Naturally, the personal shifts came first. These changes involved both lifestyle and attitude changes. In terms of lifestyle, I began to

- appreciate silence and solitude,
- create a safe space for myself,
- focus on listening to my inner voice instead of ignoring those messages deep in my consciousness, and
- permit myself to do what I need to do to take care of myself.

These changes mean that I rise earlier in the morning to meditate, read, and journal to keep me where I need to be all day. This inner work adds a dimension of peace and calm to my life, which, like that of most people, is hectic and frenetic. Keeping centered and focused helps me both mentally and physically, so I do not feel so pulled between obligations and tasks, which I now seem able to handle in a calm, almost relaxed manner. Even my colleagues have commented on the change. Now, when someone asks me to do something that I think will be too much for me, I more easily say no.

More important, I am much more comfortable with who I am. Instead of spending excess time, energy, and money at the mall, I now spend more of those critical resources on activities that feed my spirit. I want to eliminate "stuff" from my life because I easily get caught up in supervising my possessions, neglecting myself, and missing out on life. Although I have to watch myself, I have made great strides in staying above the fray. I just have to remember what's important to me and to stay focused. When I do, I am on a more spiritual path.

Classroom Changes

My changes in lifestyle and attitude have had direct effects on what I do in my classes. I have joined the mind-body health program and offer freshman English courses as part of that program. In addition, I take a mind-body health approach in all my classes.

I have become increasingly aware of how many of our students have a great deal of stress in their lives. Some are single parents who work two or more jobs. They feel the same stresses in their lives that we sometimes feel in ours, although it is probably worse for them because they may not have the education or income that we do. Therefore, I have made some changes that I believe really benefit my students and enhance my teaching.

1. **I begin class in a different way.** Early in the semester, I allow for personal introductions and discussions. Students enjoy getting to know others in their class and learning about what others have done. It's amazing how they connect with each other after they've had a few minutes to get to know each other. Many specifically note how helpful this is in their class evaluations.

   Sometimes we begin class with a few minutes of quiet time, so we can clear our minds and get ready for the class. This seems to help students eliminate distractions and come to the lesson ready to learn.

   When the weather is especially nice, we might go on a 10-minute walk around our campus lake and see the beautiful trees and flowers. When we walk outside, students enjoy visiting with their classmates and connecting with nature. When we return to the classroom, the students are more focused and ready to begin class, and their sharpened attention and positive attitude provide increased productivity. This certainly makes up for the time spent walking.

2. **I listen to students and colleagues in a very different way.** In the past, as students would come to my office, I would sometimes listen to their comments and answer their questions in a distracted manner. For example, I would sit at my computer, continue coding, look over my right shoulder, and smile an insincere smile as I would nod my head and say, "Oh, really," "How nice," "That's good." (I recently learned that a business magazine has labeled this behavior as "backgrounding." I was the queen of backgrounding.)

   Now, when students and colleagues come to talk to me in my office or anywhere else, I stop what I am doing and really focus on what the other person is saying. I maintain good eye contact and shut out distractions as much as possible. I believe this is working because Mary, a student who earned a failing grade in my class last term, is now coming to me with her personal problems, something that did not happen with my old style of interacting. I realize that all she really needs is someone to listen to her. I have been most impressed with the results of this new approach and think that being a better listener has caused students to respect me more.

3. **I connect with students on a deeper, more personal level.** Because I was always a "head" person, I would fill every minute of class time delivering information or providing activities that I believed would teach my students something. In fact, earlier in my teaching career on a student evaluation, in response to the question of whether the teacher stayed on the subject, one of my students responded, "Too much."

   Now I am more connected with students in a personal way. I don't just stay on the subject, and I am much more flexible. For example, last semester a young mother enrolled in my English 1302 class told us she was 19 years old and a single parent with a 3-year-old daughter. She confided that her family was still in her hometown, and she and her daughter were alone in Dallas with no support system. Also, English had always been her worst subject.

   Her class met in the computer lab, and she sat on the back row in the corner next to the wall. When I would go past her desk, I could see she was struggling. Not only was English her worst subject, but she also had limited computer skills. I kept encouraging her and trying to help her, but she quit coming to class after three weeks.

I saw her on campus a week or so after she'd quit attending class, so I stopped her and asked, "Shelly, where have you been?" She said she was too far behind, so she was going to drop the course. I told her that if she'd come back, I'd help her get caught up. Well, she did come back, and I did work with her. In fact, her last assignment of the semester was her *shining accomplishment*: a Web page describing herself. She even included animated pictures of Whitney Houston and her other favorite artists on her page.

My *shining accomplishment* was the wonderful card she wrote me, thanking me for helping her. She appreciated my remembering her name and said I was the only teacher who had ever remembered her like that. She also said that her mother had come into some extra money and was going to use it to buy her a computer.

The Ultimate Reward

I firmly believe that the ultimate reward for doing my inner work is becoming more comfortable with and accepting of who I am. I always thought that I had to know all the answers, but now I am at ease saying "I don't know" when a student or colleague asks me a question.

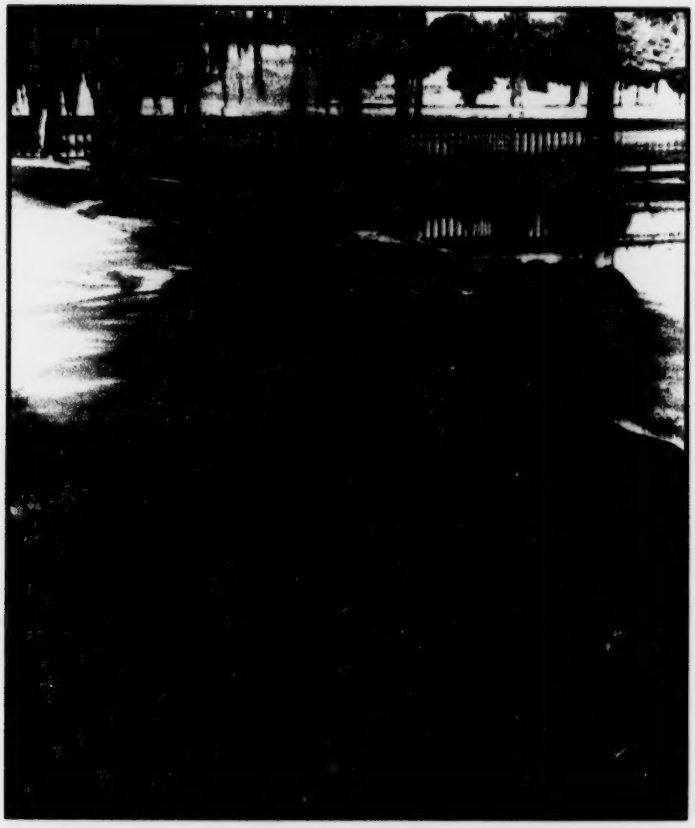
I believe this is why I've easily made the transition from teaching in the traditional classroom setting to teaching all my writing classes in the computer lab. If I don't know how to do something on the computer, I admit it and ask the students if they know how to accomplish the task. Usually, a student will know, or we'll figure it out together.

This approach has been valuable for me and for my students. Asking students to help me and their other classmates validates them and recognizes them for what they know about an area other than English. In addition, working together like this builds camaraderie and binds the class into a team. We are all there trying to help each other. When we are learning something new on the computer, students who already know what to do assist me in teaching their classmates. We really do become a learning community!

A Final Comment

Yes, teaching "who I am" has taken me from Neiman-Marcus to meditation, but it's done much more than that. It has allowed me to be comfortable with who I am–when I know the answers and when I

don't. I have moved from being a "sage on the stage" to a "guide at the side" of my students. I now connect with my students as we work together and learn together–side by side.



Barbara Corvey, *District Director of Planning and Organizational Development, has a long history with the Dallas County Community College District. She formerly held the positions of District Director of Human Resources and Director of Student Development at the Eastfield College campus. Barbara's commitment to students and the teachers who serve them includes making The Courage to Teach program available to teachers and administrators in the DCCCD. Barbara will evaluate the Fetzer Project.*

A PERSONAL JOURNEY IN A PUBLIC ARENA

Barbara Corvey

I have been in the workforce since I started college when I had an opportunity to work in the residence halls as an advisor–a job designed to help students adjust to college and to have a better experience because of a positive housing environment. As I think about themes in my personal journey of development, I list this as one of the first times that I acknowledged to myself that building a healthy environment would be a way for me to make my contribution to the learning and welfare of students.

My career has carried this theme through positions in student development, teaching, staff development, human resources, and now to my current position in planning and organizational development. Almost two years ago, I moved into this position to help build successful district programs in service, quality, and leadership. With the help of the existing staff, I also assumed the leadership and coordination of teacher formation work for the district.

Districtwide Teacher Formation Planning

In the fall of 1998, a planning group from the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) met with Parker Palmer in Madison, Wisconsin, to begin the discussion about how formation initiatives might unfold in our district. We asked a variety of questions: What is the nature of the organization? What is the mission of the staff who work here? What do the staff believe about the importance of the work they do? How do people treat each other in the workplace? What does the organization do to support how folks are treated? From discussions surrounding these questions, a new district focus has emerged. While the primary emphasis in the DCCCD traditionally has been on our faculty and student learning, we are now also focusing on organizational growth areas.

During these past two years, I have journaled my perceptions, thoughts, and insights concerning my own behavior in regard to my work. A group of us working on plans for formation initiatives intentionally focused on using the insights that we developed individually from such journaling. Our meetings were productive–work was accomplished–but our focus was very much on the environment in which our work was being done. We created space for people to participate as they wished in the comfort and assurance of practicing good dialogue with each other. We spent time focusing on building

something for the institution that would be voluntary and inclusive while we talked about how our formation experiences "bled" over into our other work and remembered to celebrate those occurrences.

We discussed how some of what we were doing was "different," and the importance of making the concepts available to others and not a secret that we held for ourselves. We incorporated many of the concepts into new ways of conducting meetings and work sessions, and we explored how these approaches fit with how we currently saw the organization.

Awakening to My Personal Formation Journey

Recently I found a ready arena for applying the formation concepts in my own office. Because of staff turnover, I was faced with filling four vacancies, so I had an opportunity to build a new workgroup. I knew I needed to move ahead quickly to meet all of the work needs, but I wanted to take the time to be sure that we were clear about what we were looking for in our new staff. I also wanted to be sure I was comfortable talking about who I was, so I could give the candidates a clear picture of what was being offered to them. The jobs we were talking to folks about were clearly defined by the skills and experience necessary to do the tasks. Of at least equal importance, however, was the conversation about the type of environment in which we wished to work.

As I began to conceptualize my plan for bringing together a new staff, I had an inner sense that in the time-honored method of identifying skills and sharing the work plan for our area, something was missing. I tried to understand this sense of discomfort–almost a yearning–while I continued my work with the formation initiatives in the district and, more important, my own study.

One day a pattern that I could recognize finally emerged. It was one of those moments when, with new eyes, chaos takes a known shape. I realized that my focus had been on the *how*–how to interview, identify skills, define the jobs, get our work done–but I had lost the incorporation of *myself* in the staffing process and a way for the new employees to bring *themselves* into the work situation as well. I experienced a deep sense of relief at this point, along with the feeling of "Oh, no!" because I knew that this was going to require a very different way of both hiring and forming a workgroup.

Parker Palmer talks about the "deforming" nature of many of our institutions. This element pushes us away from our inner selves and

separates us from any possibility for community. I wanted to gather and form a group whose members would sustain and care about each other as they performed their jobs from their authentic selves.

Journey from the Personal to the Public

And so I started on my journey. The positions were advertised; four would be filled over the summer of 1999. I was concerned about how to keep some kind of a balance, an emphasis on the individual and the working environment along with concentration on specific job skills necessary to accomplish the work. This was a time–a very concentrated time in terms of the clock–when I was journaling and making lists. While I knew that thinking about the individual and the environment had always been an emphasis in my work, I now felt an inner commitment that had new and deeper intensity. The classic fears of change loomed for me: What if I did a good job with the interviews and then couldn't sustain the cooperative model after the group was hired? Did I know enough, even in collaboration with others, to sustain such a model? I finally decided that I was far enough along in my own journey to help create an interdependent work environment with others who wanted to take this new challenge with me.

I started the interviewing process. A small group of us balanced talking about our goals and the work that we did with questions about the applicants' interests and skills. We wanted to make sure the candidates understood that although the position was located in the organizational area of planning and employee development, we were interested not only in helping others in the institution develop, but also in creating an environment that supported our own growth.

My emphasis in the individual interviews with the candidates was on reviewing the issues addressed in the first interview and making sure all the applicants' questions were answered. I was very intent on communicating what we were about and what we were going to be doing, as well as the vision of building a community together.

By mid-August, three of the four positions had been filled, and we were having our first organizational meeting. As I visualized this meeting and what I wanted to communicate, I thought about the development of "the new" and the transition from "something else." We talked as a new workgroup about our personal successes, our individual hopes for this new work, and any areas of discomfort we were experiencing. I was intent on making sure each employee saw the big picture of how our work team fit into the organization.

In the past I would have focused more on whether the work was getting done and less on what employees needed to do their jobs. Now I wanted my new staff to know they had been hired because they had good skills and that I would work to be sure they had the resources they needed. I wanted to support them to find ways to put what they knew into the context of what we were doing as a team. When one new employee began to lead a project, I saw my role as making sure she had what she needed to get started. I asked her how she approached a project, and we determined together what would best meet her needs. The question with my staff became "How do we best use the skills you have, and how can I help you do that?"

The challenge for me was beginning to crystallize more clearly–marking the journey points of our path–both in the doing of our work and in our becoming a community. I also realized that in deciding on these journey markers, we needed to collaboratively define some criteria for measuring our progress and success. We did not want to lapse into the usual practice of seeing ourselves as "better or worse" only in comparison to others or discounting the work that had been done before because we could already see areas for improvement for the next time. We wanted to focus on being in the present, and so as we started completing a couple of things, I suggested that we "document . . . celebrate . . . assess our learning . . . and go on to the next work." And those became our markers.

As we anticipate adding our fourth new staff member next month, we are looking at how we will incorporate a new member into our communal journey. We are talking about our changes now as a group, and we have discovered new markers from our brief time together.

This is obviously a new beginning. I am excited and committed to doing what I can to stay centered with myself about the possibilities while I stay supportive of others. I try to focus on objectivity in areas where it is a good tool, areas such as program evaluation and analysis of budget patterns. But I now try to open myself to new markers as I listen to the stories of my staff describing what we are doing as we create our work environment.

It is exciting to take a different way–to transfer purposefully my personal formation journey into my public work-but it also carries a heavy responsibility to a different commitment. I want to appreciate the changes and respect the unexpected. We have added another item to our to-do list of "document . . . celebrate . . . assess the learning . . . go on to the next work," and it is . . . "breathe."

❦

SAFE SPACE

Perhaps nothing affected us more during our stay at *Seasons*, the Fetzer Institute's retreat center, than the sense of safety we all felt while there. Our facilitator created such security for us during our four days together that we all felt free to take powerful risks. The effects did not wear off when we returned, but made us acutely aware of the presence or lack of safety in our own lives.

The group of teachers and administrators who went through the teacher/leader formation process were not new to the concept of creating an environment in which students feel supported enough to take risks. But, we all became more keenly aware of the value of safe space and more determined to pay attention to how we can create and enhance safety in our classrooms and workplaces.

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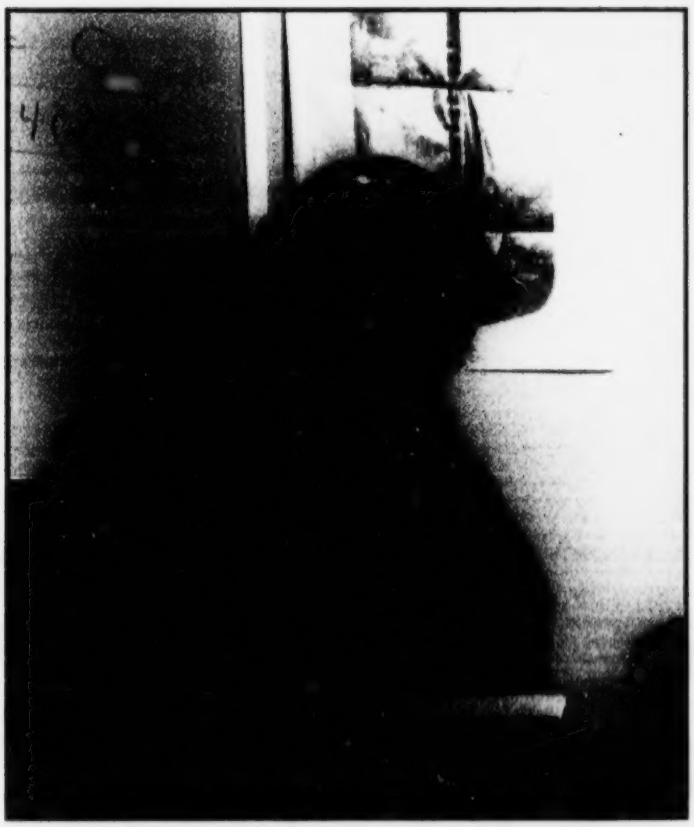

Sally Jackman *(shown journaling before class) teaches developmental math with emphasis on math anxiety and collaborative learning, as well as specially focused course sections for women returning to school. Sally chose to teach math because it was not always easy for her to learn and she felt that she could help others through her own experiences. She believes that students can learn mathematics if they believe they can learn mathematics, and she is currently developing a math class with mind-body health emphasis. Sally loves horseback riding and feels at one with herself while riding.*

SAFE SPACE

Sally Jackman

> *Each time I walk into a classroom, I can choose the place within myself from which my teaching will come, just as I can choose the place within my students toward which my teaching will be aimed.*
> Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*

The phone call came in around one o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon in February. "Would you like to go to the Fetzer Institute? One of the members scheduled to go will not be able to make the trip, and you are on the top of the alternate list." My first question was, "When do we leave?" "Thursday morning," replied Sue Jones, project coordinator. I remembered applying to go to the Fetzer Institute in October. I wanted to participate but did not know exactly what I was getting into; now I would find out. I spent Wednesday getting substitutes for my classes, doing the paperwork to go on the trip, and hurriedly packing.

I told my family I thought I was going on some type of retreat, that we might be writing curriculum for use in our classes. I had remembered reading that participants in the Fetzer program would be expected to turn one of our classes in the fall into a mind-body health class. My husband's reaction was, "How can a developmental mathematics class have a mind-body health emphasis?" I had no idea, but I was willing to find out.

When I arrived at the airport on Thursday morning, I was eagerly anticipating our trip to Michigan. Caught up in the joy of making the trip, I had no idea what was waiting for me in Kalamazoo. The frozen lake was beautiful, the food was great, and the room was superb. The time was one for reflecting and looking within myself. It is hard to share just what took place at *Seasons*–the joy, the beauty, the quiet, and the deep community we shared.

Then came the blow. "I had to do what? Write a paper. Who me, a math teacher, write? You must be kidding." I panicked. I was expecting to write curriculum maybe, but never an article for colleagues to read.

As I struggled with the writing assignment, I wanted to explore how I could use what I felt and experienced at *Seasons* and apply it to my classroom. If I were to ask my students, "How do you feel about math?" the majority would answer this question quite negatively. My guess is that they share some of the same feelings I was having about having to write. Their prior experiences have left them with bad feelings about their abilities in mathematics. So many times,

developmental math students have to overcome their distrust or even hatred of mathematics before they can begin to learn. I had to do the same thing in writing this article. I had to overcome my fear and skepticism about my own ability to write.

In *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer talks about creating a learning space that is "hospitable–inviting as well as open, safe and trustworthy, as well as free." Through the years, I have always tried to make my students feel comfortable in my math class. For example, I often start class out the first day by asking the students to complete this sentence in writing: *Mathematics is the color* _____ *because* _____. I have students share their responses first with each other in groups of two or three, and then with the entire class. Normally, about 85 percent of the responses are negative, and I use this exercise to help students see that they are not alone in their feelings. Too often a student will sit in a class and feel she is the only one lost, confused, and overwhelmed. I want them to see that others share their feelings and that they can help each other make it through this class to learn mathematics.

Rica Garcia, the writing teacher and member of our Seasons group who helped us write our articles this spring, has been great in helping me feel safe to risk writing. I can see that when students, like me, who are insecure about their abilities can begin to feel secure, they can accomplish the task that has been asked of them. If Rica had not created a learning space that was hospitable and charged with hope, I still would not be writing this article. I would have figured out some way to get out of it. Doesn't this sound like what some of our students try to do? So, a developmental math class can be a mind-body health class just by creating an environment that is safe.

One of the activities that Rica had us do was to think about when we put the writer in us in hiding. What caused this creative part of our being to go away? It took me about a week before I discovered some of what caused me to decide I could not write, but when I did, I found I could write again.

In the fall, I will again start my classes by having the students complete the sentence about the color of mathematics. However, instead of my pointing out that they are not alone, I will let them discover this truth in their groups. Also, I plan to have them think about what caused the mathematician in them to hide. For example, someone may have told them they couldn't do math, or perhaps they were laughed at when they tried to answer a question but got it wrong. After the students have had several days to reflect about what led to their losing their mathematical confidence, I will have them write

about it in class and continue outside if necessary since I have discovered the power of writing to unlock fears.

The next class period I will put students into small groups to share what they have discovered. I will call these "groups of encouragement" and will continue these groups throughout the semester to help students prepare for tests and learn collaboratively. If a safe learning space can help me to write, then I know that a similar environment for my students will help them learn mathematics.

One of the other activities we did both at Fetzer and in our workshops at Richland was to spend a few minutes in silence to focus before we started our meetings. I want to use this activity in my classroom to help my students get quiet and let go of the thoughts that are distracting or possibly attacking them as we work on mathematics. I know that the time of silence truly helped me to be at the meeting and not somewhere else, and I want my students to have this time to come together as a learning community.

I feel, as most teachers do, that I must cover the material, so it will take some practice on my part to learn that I do not have to fill every minute with mathematical facts and exercises. I will try to take my teacher-centered classroom and turn it into a subject-centered one. I have not completely figured out how I will accomplish this goal, but I do know that I can achieve it because I can write, and if I can keep writing, then my students can learn mathematics. By helping my students reclaim the mathematician in them, I will help them become whole people, which is the ultimate mind-body connection. I will create a safe place for learning for my students and me.

***Thomas A. McLaughlin**, Dean of Students, is a former coach and physical educator whose involvement with the Mind-Body Health Program at Richland College began approximately 20 years ago when he developed and conducted the Employee Wellness Program. His role in recent years has changed to that of an administrator, but he has maintained his lifelong interest and involvement with wellness. At age 61, he remains a competitive runner.*

The "Nocebo" Effect in Academia

Thomas A. McLaughlin

While most of us are familiar with the placebo effect in the field of medicine, many may not realize that the term has recently been converted into a new term, "nocebo," to describe the negative effect a doctor's opinion can have on a patient's recovery. Both terms deal with the power of suggestion on the part of the physician *and* the patient's expectations. The bedside manner of a physician appears to hasten the recovery of a patient if he or she is upbeat, confident, and kind, so physicians are more careful than ever about remarks made to patients because of the possible nocebo influence on the patient's psyche and prognosis. In Japan, for example, the diagnosis of cancer is still routinely withheld from patients since it may depress them unduly, and many American physicians even avoid making negative comments while the patient is under anesthesia for much the same reason.

Similarly, I believe that the *manner* and *atmosphere* in which I as Dean of Students deal with student discipline problems is important to their successful resolution. Like the physician, I believe that the creation of a positive, supportive environment is an important first step in dealing with most student behavior problems. Conversely, a negative and adversarial attitude on the part of the dean (the nocebo effect) generally sets the stage for a less effective resolution to the student problem.

I know that the mere act of being summoned to my office is stressful for most students. I put myself in the shoes of the student: How would I feel if a uniformed campus police officer had me pulled from class to deliver a summons? Guilty or innocent, wouldn't I feel some degree of immediate threat? And wouldn't many of my classmates become anxious needlessly? With that in mind, my policy is generally to deliver the summons personally to the student at the end of class, rather than have a campus police officer do it for me. While this is a time-consuming process for me, it often saves the student a great deal of embarrassment. Because we can often proceed immediately to my office, it also saves apprehension on the part of the student who would have to wait a few days to find out how a problem would be dealt with if the summons were delivered by mail or courier.

Even before the actual delivery of the student summons, I start preparing for the upcoming meeting. If I am anticipating a particularly stressful or complex disciplinary meeting with a student, I will make a

special effort to go for a walk or run to prepare myself mentally for that session. In addition to providing an opportunity to collect my thoughts in advance of the meeting, I feel strongly about the calming or tranquilizing effect that the exercise has on me. When I do not have time for movement, I simply allow myself a few minutes for focusing and calming my body and my mind before I see the student.

Since I feel that first impressions and instinctual reactions are usually powerful, I create a harmonious office climate for the student's arrival and find a way to make a personal *connection* with the student. Something as simple as a greeting and the extension of my hand for the therapeutic effect of a handshake is a good start. I attempt to do everything I can to create a trustworthy environment and a "safe space," as Parker Palmer would say, to address the possible apprehensions and fears of the student entering my office and to provide support through personal encouragement.

I realize the impact that the physical setting can have on the student and on me. The mind-body health literature suggests that quieting the mind causes the body to follow suit, so I attempt to create a physical setting that promotes open and honest dialogue. I make sure the conference will be completely private and free from distractions and interruptions, with both the student and myself seated in comfortable chairs. Soft music, works of art, and plants help reduce anxiety and calm the student. I keep a box of tissue in my office for obvious reasons.

My time alone with the student provides a wonderful opportunity for us to see each other as humans rather than in the adversarial roles of student and disciplinarian. Instead of getting angry, I talk to the student about his or her behavior, perhaps even sharing stories about my own life that apply.

Perhaps most important, I listen attentively to everything the student has to say because I can never know enough about what is going on in the student's mind. Sometimes all the student really needs is someone to listen. I focus on asking rather than telling while maintaining a nonjudgmental attitude to determine how the student got into the situation. I then ask how the situation could be handled differently next time, keeping in mind that ethical development is more likely to occur in a supportive climate of action and experience followed by the opportunity to think and reflect.

If there is a punishment phase to the resolution of the matter, I consider making the student an active participant by helping me think of an appropriate consequence for the campus offense. While I want

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students to assume responsibility for their behavior, I also want them to learn from their mistakes, rather than to be punished for what they have done.

I have heard it said that creative leaders hold a different set of assumptions–essentially positive–about human nature from the assumptions–essentially negative–made by controlling leaders. Some may consider part or all of this approach unconventional, and that is all right, but knowing that student perceptions often *do* become reality, I feel that the placebo approach to dealing with student disciplinary matters is vastly superior to the nocebo.

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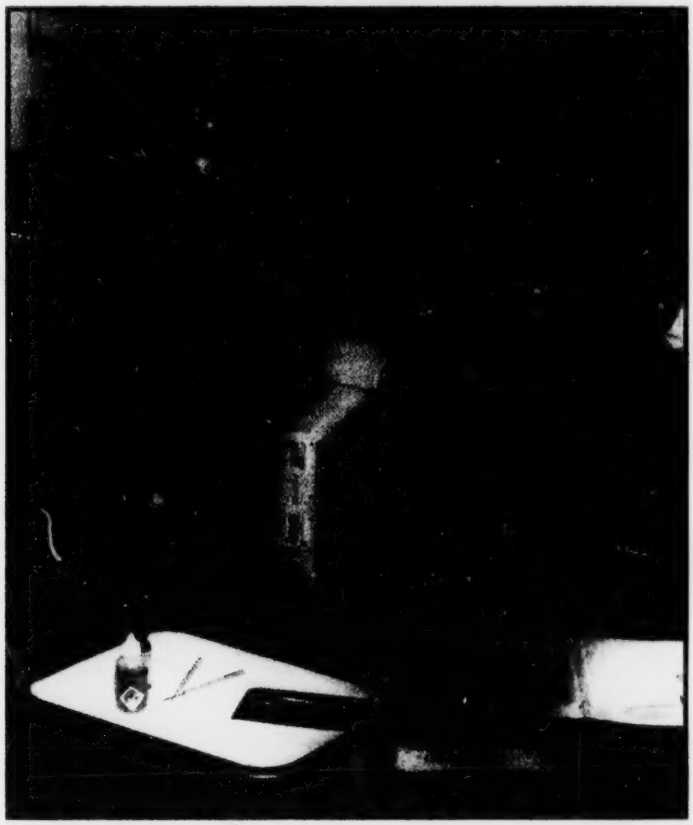


Adriana Cobo-Frenkel *(standing) teaches biology and anatomy and physiology using computer presentations to include images and videos of the class material as well as digitized classical music at the introduction to each lecture. She incorporates collaborative learning activities in a mind-body health approach that focuses on the topic of endorphins throughout the semester. Her major emphasis is to prepare her students for lifelong learning. In addition to teaching, Adriana is also an accomplished sculptor-she designed and sculpted the marble Möbius strip featured on the cover of this monograph.*

THE "WOWS" OF BIOLOGY

Adriana Cobo-Frenkel

As a biology instructor, I am always struggling to give my students something more than just the basic knowledge and concepts of my subject. Every semester I ask myself, "What can I do to make biology more relevant, significant, and meaningful to my students? How can I convince my students that the subject of biology is very much part of their lives and that the magnificent ways that our bodies are put together and maintained allow us to live better lives? How can I provide a safe and friendly environment in my classes, so that each one of my students can feel supported? Throughout my years of teaching, I have attempted many approaches to answer these questions. In this essay, I share some of the attempts that have worked better than others.

On the first day of a new class, after presenting my syllabus and the requirements of the course, I divide the class into groups of about ten students. I ask students in each group to introduce themselves to one another by giving their names and sharing a special personal experience or the most pleasant event they experienced during the recent weeks of vacation. I emphasize that these have to be positive experiences. Students record the comments of their peers in a special section of their notebooks. I join one of the groups, so I also can be a participant in the sharing of experiences. I use the positive experiences that students shared to introduce them to the first topic of biology–the chemistry of life. I explain to them that molecules in the brain are responsible for those good feelings they have just described and that every time we have pleasant feelings or nice thoughts and a sense of tranquility and peace, we produce chemical molecules in our nervous system that help our entire body. I explain that these are only a few of the numerous chemical reactions that contribute to keeping us alive and well. In this way, as students meet each other and begin to bond into a learning community, they are also introduced to the topics of atomic and molecular structure.

I have been fortunate to teach from a biology text which emphasizes the work of Candace Pert on neurotransmitters and which explains the importance of these molecules in our body. Pert's research over the past 20 years on these neurotransmitter molecules–known as endorphins or enkephalins–has contributed to a better understanding of the relationship between wellness of the mind and of the body. She has given a different meaning to the word emotion, and for the first time, it has been used in a scientific way. Her book, *Molecules of*

Emotion, advances concepts of the relationship between the functions of the body and mind. The medical field is now accepting the importance that endorphins, the molecules of emotions, have in the immune system and how they can contribute to healthier lives.

The topic of endorphins is a very helpful introduction to additional subjects that the students find hard to comprehend, such as the study and the understanding of the structures of amino acids and proteins. Throughout the semester we look for situations that will increase our production of endorphins. We learn that laughing our hearts out, walking and talking to a good friend, playing with our children, loving someone, looking at a beautiful flower or a gorgeous sunset, dancing, or singing will create for us those magic molecules.

I use the topic of endorphins as one of our themes for the entire semester. At the beginning of each week, I have one student share a glorious experience during the previous weekend as I did on the first day of class. Each one of us keeps a record of these events. As one of my students calls it, we are looking for the "wows" of our lives.

Since my early teenage years, I have loved classical music, which has been a source of inspiration, tranquility, and enjoyment for me. During the past five years, it has become a regular activity at the beginning of every one of my lectures to play a couple of minutes of classical music. I felt strange the first time I did it, guilty as though I were robbing my students of two precious minutes of the teaching of biology, but before long, I realized I was helping my students calm themselves and prepare for my lectures.

Now we all listen to Beethoven, Schubert, Mozart, or Strauss in silence and with a sense of awe. I have found music is especially important before a major exam. I give students a few minutes to get calm and close their eyes, to rid their minds of any thoughts or ideas not related to the exam while they listen to a soft passage, an adagio from a Mozart concerto or a sonata of Schubert. Students have often thanked me for these minutes of calmness before an exam. A great variety of studies have been done on the importance and power of music in learning, concentration, and memory. Don Campbell's *The Mozart Effect* explains the implication of music in health and intelligence as do the books of Hal Ligerman and Kay Gardner. Has this worked for my students? I think so. I have not been able to measure the results in a tangible way, but certainly the music has given the students a sense of calmness and peace I had not observed before.

One of the hardest topics for biology students is cellular respiration, the study of how our cells and those of every living

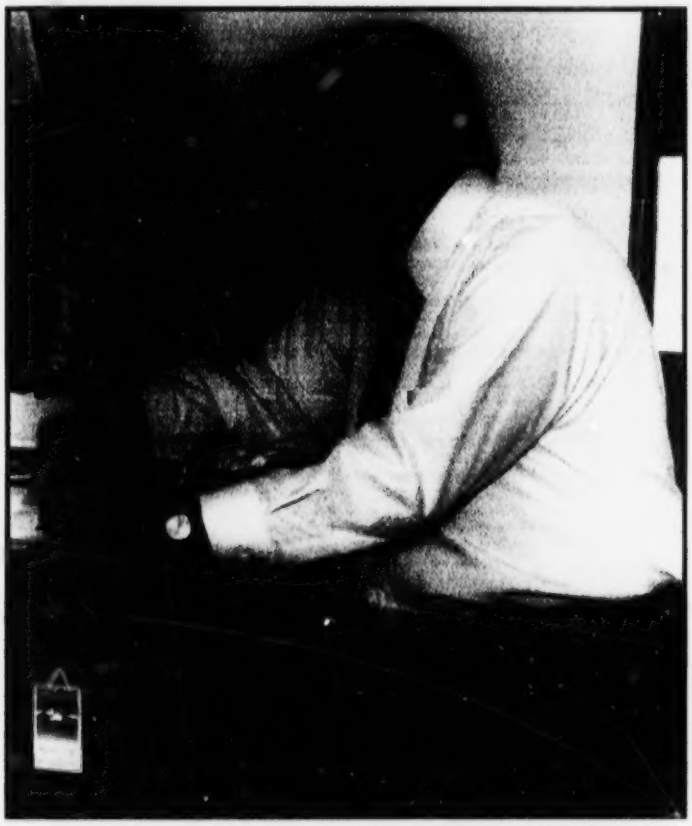
organism on earth use energy. Related to this topic is the topic of fermentation, a process by which a tiny organism called yeast in the kingdom Fungi obtains energy. In order to make this topic more meaningful and tangible to the students, I give them an assignment: to make bread at home (from scratch and not using a bread machine) by mixing and kneading flour, water, and yeast and to observe the rising of the bread while studying the chemical processes that are taking place. This exercise allows them to understand the reasons this organism performs fermentation and to experience one of the most primitive rituals of mankind–the sharing of bread.

Students bring their bread to class and offer it to each other. We celebrate the occasion by passing bread from student to student while we talk about this ancient activity and discuss the chemical reactions that occurred in the bread.

It is very rewarding to have students tell me years after departing from Richland that they are still searching out those quiet moments and natural endorphins that helped them through difficult times. Some report they are still listening to classical music.

The story of Peggy (fictitious name) is an especially touching one. Peggy was a student in one of my biology classes. She was in her thirties, a quiet, polite student. She never missed a class and often came to my office to talk about her interest in continuing her education now that her children were in school. She was very thin and pale with deep, dark circles around her eyes. She had difficulty with the subject of biology but was able to earn a passing grade. I had not seen Peggy for about six months when she came to see me. There was something different about her. She said, "I had to come to see you. I am here to thank you. You have changed my life in a profound way and you need to know it." She began to tell me her story and how for fifteen years, since high school, she had been highly addicted to marijuana. She and her boyfriend, now her husband, had used it every day since then in all the different forms available. The study of endorphins taught her there were other ways to obtain happiness. She shared with her husband her experiences in her biology class and the information about endorphins, and they decided to stop using drugs. She had come to celebrate with me; she and her husband had been sober for six months, and her life had changed. Her children were much happier. The family went on outings together and celebrated life in many different ways. I was elated. We embraced, and I thanked her for sharing this with me. I will never forget Peggy, and I wonder how many more Peggys I may encounter in my classes each semester.

My goal is that at the end of the class, a passing grade will not be the only measure of my students' success. I hope that their lives will be enriched and they will continue to search for natural and healing pleasures as they continue to learn about themselves and their extraordinary biology.



***Fred Newbury's** academic background is varied, with emphasis in management, psychology, economics, and the social sciences. He found that economics seemed to be the most effective bridge between these elements but has also taught management and organizational behavior. Fred enjoys the dynamic nature of macroeconomics where the questions never change, but the answers do.*

OPENING A LEARNING SPACE WITH HUMOR

Fred Newbury

Several years ago I was sitting in my office trying to get organized for the new semester when I noticed a young lady standing in my doorway. As I looked more closely, I recognized her as a former student and also realized that she appeared to be on the verge of tears. "Is something wrong?" I asked. The question seemed a bit lame and obvious, but it was the first that came to mind. She sat down, and we began to talk. She told me she had just started her second semester at a local university and that she was having some difficulty with the transition. In addition to pressing financial problems, she said that she was having problems relating to her various professors. The classroom environment, according to her description, was very distant, formal, detached, and, in some instances, extremely dogmatic.

I asked her to give me some examples of what she was experiencing. She thought for a moment and finally said, "Here's a prime example. One of my economics professors told the class to forget everything that we had studied in our first course unless it related to supply-side economics."

She explained that she felt some anger at hearing that since we had covered all of the major theories in my class. "I worked very hard to understand those ideas," she said, "and for what?" According to her, the instructor was so dogmatic about his ideas, she naturally assumed that he must be right.

As we talked further, I realized that her frustration seemed to center on two basic concerns: first, she did not understand why there were so many different opinions about things, especially in economics, and second, she did not understand why the environment in her college classroom seemed so unfriendly.

My first reaction was to recount one of the old one-liners: "If you placed all of the economists in the world, end to end, you still wouldn't reach a conclusion," and Harry Truman's famous line, "Bring me an economist with only one arm because I am so tired of hearing 'but on the other hand.'" She smiled in a tolerant sort of way.

Over the years, I have thought a great deal about various students' comments and classroom incidents. How do we equip students to deal with the inevitable ambiguity that they will face in today's world? And, as if the first problem were not enough, how do we foster a classroom environment that is safe and nurturing as well as intellectually demanding?

Beginning students in economics are always a bit surprised at how much opinion enters into the application of theory. Also, most students do not realize how strong their own opinions are. In one class, as we were talking about the problem of unemployment, a student raised her hand and stated that she thought that anyone who was unemployed and on welfare should be put to death after six months. After I recovered from my shock, I realized two things: one, she was serious, and two, there was a real learning opportunity present. The temptation, of course, was to respond in the negative way that I was feeling toward her and the comment. But resisting that impulse, I was able to generate considerable energy to get other students really involved with the issue. In fact, I found myself defending her against others in the class who reacted to her radical suggestion. I could not have had a better "shill" if I had planned the incident.

And if perhaps you are wondering about the effect this approach had on my student with the strong opinions about the unemployed on welfare, she told the class near the end of the semester that she had changed her mind about the death sentence. To placate all the "bleeding heart liberals," she concluded that we should just parachute all welfare recipients onto a desert island and let them "fight it out" for themselves. This was quite a shift in attitude.

As I talk to former students, the things that are most remembered and mentioned about my class are the stories and jokes that I use to illustrate various points and the overall atmosphere in the classroom. I used to be a little embarrassed by these comments since the fun we had seemed to be less important than the great intellectual insights that I hoped I was imparting.

I have come to value this feedback, though, and to realize that the atmosphere students describe as fun is a critical element related to what Parker Palmer describes in *The Courage to Teach* as "creating a space for all students–a space that is non-threatening, supportive, and nurturing." I have found that humor is an important and effective tool for me in creating this kind of climate in the classroom. Similarly, I have always appreciated the quote by Gilbert Highet in *The Art of Teaching*: "I consider a day's teaching wasted if we do not have one hearty laugh. When people laugh together, they cease to be young and old, master and pupils, workers and drivers, jailer and prisoners; they become a single group of human beings enjoying its existence."

When I mention humor, I'm not suggesting only joke telling, although that is certainly a part. As Dr. Clifford Kuhn, a noted psychiatrist who has studied the use of humor in therapy, has stated,

"Humor is spice that we add to a dish. It is not a meal in itself, but the main course would be very bland without it."

I realize that this may sound a bit frivolous. A classroom is a serious place; important work should go on there. As strange as it may sound to some, I believe that important work can and does go on in an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable enough to take themselves and others less seriously. There is some risk in this, of course. Students could perceive that the instructor sees the class as a lark and will impose no real rigor. Control, or the illusion of control, changes with this approach. Some students have a tendency to go too far and not want to return to the serious phase, and this is where the art comes in. It is important that everyone, including the instructor is treated with respect and that nothing important is trivialized. We have all had the arrogant, condescending student, who is seemingly determined not to cooperate, but humor can be used effectively to bring the student into the learning community.

High expectations for students are not excluded from this approach. In fact, I think that much more can be accomplished within an atmosphere of fun. A nurturing, supportive environment is more fertile ground than a confrontive and negative one. In fact, the "unfriendly classroom" in the transfer institution that my student described inhibits rather than enhances the learning process.

I've come to understand that effective classroom teaching is simply effective leadership. Even though that statement sounds simple, we all know that it is not. Leadership is an extremely complex and dynamic phenomenon. What works today with one group may not work tomorrow with the same group, whether it is employees or students. However, the overall atmosphere that we each foster can be perceived as negative and closed or positive and nurturing regardless of the changing tasks of the group. The choice between the two is an easy one. Making it work effectively is sometimes a different story, and in my experience, humor is an important tool for me to use to create a spacious and relaxed environment where different opinions can be voiced, heard, and considered.

***Becki Williams** (center) is an educator seeking to understand how students learn. Her preparatory chemistry and inorganic chemistry classrooms provide opportunities for students to become more efficient learners by exposing them to a variety of study skills, cooperative learning strategies, and mind-body health principles. Becki enjoys creative problem solving in all its forms, including playing games, coaching Odyssey of the Mind teams, teaching, and parenting.*

I'M IN MY ELEMENT

Becki Williams

> *The mode of knowing that dominates education creates disconnections between teachers, their subjects, and their students because it is rooted in fear. This mode, called objectivism, portrays truth as something we can achieve only by disconnecting ourselves, physically and emotionally, from the thing we want to know. . . . The intuitive is dismissed as sentimental, the imagination is seen as chaotic and unruly, and storytelling is labeled as personal and pointless. . . . That is why music, art and dance are at the bottom of the academic pecking order and the hard sciences are at the top.*
> -Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*

Teaching and learning chemistry is a minefield riddled with fear. I had firsthand experience with this fear in undergraduate school. The chemistry professors at the large state university I attended were primarily interested in research and drew straws to see who would teach undergraduate courses. I was usually informed that there would be no office hours and to check with the teaching assistants if I couldn't hack it on my own. In four years, not one professor learned my name. My negative feelings about those experiences were clarified when my son proclaimed in middle school that he hated science! I replied, "Don't say I hate science. Say, I hate science class."

I loved chemistry as a field of study but felt unwelcome, inept, and afraid in these college classrooms. Palmer writes in *The Courage to Teach*, "Good teaching is an act of hospitality toward the young." I knew that I had not experienced good teaching, and I was determined to right the wrong. I set out to prove, mostly to myself, that teaching and learning a "hard science" need not be hard!

My quest for 25 years has been to create the right environment, to perfect my teaching techniques, and to develop appropriate support strategies to enable each student to succeed. But chemistry's reputation as a "hard science" is universally known, and nearly every student who walks through the door at the beginning of the semester reeks with fear. They've often put off taking chemistry until there's nothing left in their degree plan. Some have chosen other careers to avoid chemistry until boredom and frustration compel them to pursue their dreams.

What have I done to address this fear? In the syllabus packet, I include an information sheet for students to complete and return at the next class meeting. I ask about previous math and science courses, current course

load, work and family responsibilities, favorite course and why they liked it, hobbies and interests, and reasons for taking chemistry. I offer extra credit if they attach a photograph and ask them to write several paragraphs on the back about important life experiences or things that would help me to support their learning. To ease their anxiety about revealing information about themselves, I include the same sheet filled out with information about myself. I mention in my statement on the back my fears as a chemistry student and frequently that prompts them to mention their own. I study the picture they submit to learn their names quickly and to use as a prompt when they ask for recommendation letters years later.

I've also found it helpful to share the insights of several prominent chemists. I distribute a published interview with Roald Hoffman, a chemistry professor who won a Nobel Prize at the age of 44. In the interview Hoffman states, "I like the idea that human beings can do anything they want to . . . to be a chemist requires no special talent, I'm glad to say. Anyone can do it with hard work." I also ask students to read and discuss an editorial from the *Chemical & Engineering News*. "In Memory of Glenn Seaborg" relates the magic of a Nobel Prize winning chemist and college professor for whom element 106, Seaborgium, was recently named. Seaborg is quoted as saying, "My advice is this: Do not worry too much about your intelligence, about how you compare with your contemporaries. . . . Don't underestimate yourself."

But of course, students' fears are deeply ingrained. It's not enough to tell them that "chemistry is not really rocket science." Lack of intelligence is not all they fear. The chemistry students that I teach at Richland College often feel isolated and different from their peers, even when they are quite typical. Students need to know others like themselves and usually only need to turn to their neighbor to find someone. I incorporate cooperative activities into every class meeting.

Within the first two weeks of the semester, I use details students provide in their information sheet, observations of their work and interactions in class, and other factors that will result in the most heterogeneous groupings possible to assign students to permanent base groups. The base groups meet at the beginning of each class for the purpose of checking homework, distributing graded papers and handouts, discussing questions they have about outside reading or the previous class meeting, and providing social support and encouragement.

To help the students get to know each other, I give them one or two questions to prompt their discussion, and they record their responses on a grid kept in their base group folder. Initially questions are low risk such as, "Where were you born?" or "Name something newcomers

should know about Richland College." As trust and rapport build, I give prompts like, "Describe a classroom where you felt uncomfortable," "What's easy (or difficult) about chemistry?" or "Describe a fear you experience in this class (or some other class)." Once connections are made, students form a support system that usually evolves into evening and weekend study groups. I have found that time spent in class fostering these connections is repaid by the students' increased effort and interactions outside of class.

Examples of other cooperative activities include working with a partner to pair-read and discuss a section of the text and then answer related questions, reworking a difficult problem from a test with base group members before graded tests are returned, or writing a summary of the steps involved in a complex chemistry problem with two other class members and then working the problem together.

Reading *The Courage to Teach* and attending the Fetzer retreat helped me realize that I can do even more to help students address their fears. I came back to class with a renewed desire to deal with the tension and tears that often occur for a few students on test day. One student in particular, I'll call Amy, was already working hard enough. She frequently studied with several others from class in a nearby conference room, and they often tracked me down with questions. I knew that Amy went to tutoring weekly, and she always turned in required work on time. She actively participated in class and frequently was the first to offer a correct explanation in a whole class discussion. However, even though I distributed sample tests for students to use as a final self-assessment prior to test day, Amy seldom "cracked the code." I noticed during a help session that she processed verbally while working a problem. I asked her to stay, and we talked about her progress. She described for me the times she felt most productive when she studied. During those times, she talked out loud. I suggested that she take the next test alone so that she could talk out loud while she worked. She repeated the reply I often hear from students, "In the real world, at a university, I won't have this opportunity. I need to learn to function in the real world." I told Amy that for now she needed to succeed and that relying on her strengths would be the best way to begin. Then she shared her larger fear: What if the environment was hospitable to her learning style, and she still failed? I hadn't considered this aspect of fear.

My experience with Amy caused me to reflect on aspects of my own college courses that I had found inhospitable. Because I planned to teach chemistry, I knew that learning was of utmost importance and a grade of A or B would probably reflect competence. Although I usually earned only 60-80 percent on tests, I was awarded A's and B's. Grading

on the curve made me look competent on paper, but I felt like an imposter. Grading on the curve also heightened my sense of fear because I never knew how classmates would perform on future tests or in different courses. I realize now that part of my desire to see students succeed in my classroom is to affirm myself as a learner. If they learn and thrive in a hospitable environment, that means that I could have done the same. I see that I am still looking for authentic success.

As I think about what to do with these new insights gained from exploring my inner landscape, I know that chemistry is about fear and hard work. Forget the notion of intelligence. Besides helping students acquire the skills needed to be lifelong learners and helping them learn how to think, I want to make sure the environment values and fosters their courage as well.

A student who began in preparatory chemistry and completed two more semesters of science major chemistry at Richland College wrote to me after he'd transferred to a "real university:"

> *I used to fear education for many false reasons. Principles utilized by you in teaching have enabled me to replace these illusions with technique, confidence, and style. I have success in my pocket and that gives me a peace of mind in the eye of the storm of life, which for now at least, boils down to tests and deadlines. The past three semesters have in a way been the beginning of my education, and I know and believe I was in the right place, at the right time, and with the right person.*

I have a T-shirt that I wear celebrating the naming of element 106, Seaborgium. It looks like an element block from the periodic table, with the heading "I'M IN MY ELEMENT."

I'M IN MY ELEMENT

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As a hospitable chemistry professor, I know that I am in my element, and my goal is for students to feel that way too.

DEEP LISTENING

Probably the hardest concept for us to grasp, both at the Fetzer retreat and when we returned home, was that of listening. Not that we didn't recognize the crucial importance of listening, but we were so accustomed to listening in limited ways-usually to argue our point or to solve a problem being presented to us. We found we were, for the most part, excellent advice givers and very poor listeners.

But at the heart of formation work is listening-listening from the heart, holding the space safe until solutions can be found by the one searching for them. It wasn't easy to do at Seasons and was even harder when we got home, but every one of us has taken on that challenge-sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Our students notice, our partners and friends notice, and with practice, we are learning to listen more deeply.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

***Martha Timberlake Vines**, assistant dean, directs the Center for Independent Study at Richland College. Her lifelong areas of study include human behavior and development, intercultural communications, and leadership. She draws from all these areas in her work with a diverse staff of approximately 40 tutors from 10 countries in addition to the United States.*

EYE OF THE STORM: KEEPING CENTERED AMID CONFLICT

Martha Timberlake Vines

"Why don't you hire tutors who speak English? This is supposed to be a place where students get help, but nobody can understand these people. They're no help whatsoever!" This outburst was followed by a loud huff and a defiant stare, directed straight at me, the director of the Center for Independent Study. I responded, "Why don't you come into my office and let's talk."

The student stared at me for a few moments and then somewhat reluctantly nodded in agreement. Once we were both seated, I asked the student a few general questions, including what his name was, what course he was taking, who his instructor was, and whether he had been to the learning center before. Then I explained that our goal in the CIS is student success and that I wanted him to know he would be able to get the help he needed for his class. At that point I also offered an affirmation of something in the student's perception of the situation: "Even though we all speak English here in the CIS, we have many different accents, and it's true that some people find it easier to understand one over the others. After all, our ears may not be used to listening to accents that are different from our own. So you might be more comfortable coming to the lab when Mike, Julie, Doris, or John is on duty. Here are the days and times when they're here."

The student seemed pleased that there were other tutors available and agreed to return during their scheduled times. I closed our discussion by giving the student my business card along with a request that he contact me if he had additional tutoring concerns during the semester and also let me know how well he did at the end of the course. As he stood up to leave, the student paused to ask me about a carved wooden grandfather figure on the top of the cabinet over my desk. I explained that the figure came from Cheju, Korea, and told him briefly about my experience on the island and the artist who gave me the carving. The student left with a promise that he would get in touch with me at the end of the semester. It was a promise he kept, and in his email he told me that he appreciated the help the tutors had given him.

Because my participation in the Fetzer Project has brought a clearer awareness of underlying elements that define behavior, it has helped me become a better administrator in important ways. First, it has affirmed my deep-seated belief that expectations often define outcomes. For that reason, I try to expect good results from each

interaction even when it takes time and patience to work through rough spots along the way. In my experience, I've found that when we expect the best of others, we will generally find the best. Therefore, when the student came to complain about tutoring, I expected that we could find a suitable solution to his concerns, and I took the time to invite him into my office to talk about the situation.

Second, I have found that expectations alone are not sufficient to bring about suitable outcomes to difficult situations. It is also important to establish healthy communication patterns. For example, my initial impulse had been to point out to the student just how uninformed his position was. However, I knew that my claiming that the staff is competent as a counter-argument to the student's claim that they weren't would not lead to a suitable resolution of the problem. After all, we both believed we were right and neither of us was likely to change our mind based on anything the other person said. Arguing with the student about the competence of my staff's English skills would not have convinced him that the tutors speak English well. He did not share my multicultural perspective and did not appear to see value in working with someone different from himself.

Similarly, pointing out the ineffectiveness of his listening skills would not have convinced the student to practice better listening strategies. From his perspective, the fact that he couldn't understand something was a result of the other person's inability to communicate effectively, not his own unwillingness to listen to that person. We both would have left that argument feeling defeated. However, by tuning in to the underlying issues–fear of failure and frustration at not being able to master the material readily–I could shift my focus to a solution for the problem and, ultimately, student success.

As a result of the Fetzer retreat, I also understand more clearly the importance of the physical environment on interactions between people, and so I am more attentive to maintaining a soothing atmosphere in my office. For instance, anytime I'm at work, classical music plays on the radio/CD player in my office. There are also scented candles or potpourri in the office to welcome guests with a light, calming aroma. In addition, I have decorated my office with a variety of items collected in travels throughout the United States as well as other countries. There are also interesting frames displaying photos of people and places that bring warm memories to mind whenever I look at them. All of these things–the music, the aromas, the photos–invite questions from guests to the office and open discussions that might not otherwise occur in a different atmosphere. In fact, it

might have been that brief exchange about the carved, wooden grandfather figure at the end of the student's visit that reinforced the connection and motivated him to let me know of his success at the end of the semester.

In retrospect, I realize that the most profound result of the Fetzer Project for me has been the opportunity to reflect on my life's work and how it shapes me even as I create it. As I strive to foster the best environment possible for staff and students, the skills necessary for achieving that end shape me into a better person.

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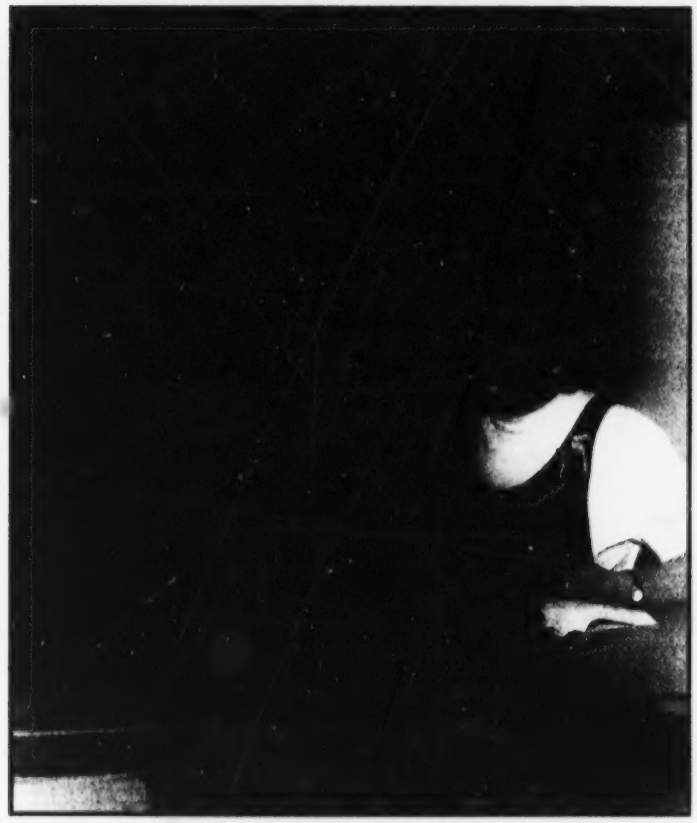


Sue Jones *(right) teaches psychology and physical education classes, and coordinates Richland's Mind-Body Health Program. She has team-taught a mind-body health psychology class with two of her colleagues. Sue is a* Courage to Teach *facilitator and works with individual and institutional formation and renewal in the Dallas County Community College District. She also serves on the board of the National Community College Wellness Conference. Sue encourages students to "Know thyself" and honor their inner wisdom. She also believes passionately in the importance of our relationship with all people, the animals of the world, and Mother Earth.*

THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

Sue Jones

When someone deeply listens to you
it is like holding out a dented cup
you've had since childhood
and watching it fill up with
cold, fresh water.

-John Fox, *Finding What You Didn't Lose*

It was the first day of a team-taught, mind-body health psychology class. I had recently read a work by Glenna Gerard and Linda Teurfs about the technique of dialogue, which they suggest refers to a communication pattern that allows participants to expand understanding, learn from one another, collaborate, and build community. In such dialogue, all contributions are accepted at face value without the need to be right, win, or fix the problem or the person. My co-teacher, Lee Paez, and I thought this technique would provide an excellent framework for the interactions of our class, so we decided to start our first class with an exploration of the building blocks for dialogue and the behaviors that support them.

We were seated in a large circle so that we could all see one another. "Let's consider the following guidelines for the way we're going to interact with one another this semester," I began. "I think this will create an open climate for our work, enabling us to honor the contributions of each group member and to learn as much as we can from one another. After all, we are a group of teachers and learners." The students seemed interested and attentive, so I proceeded.

"First we need to work at suspending judgment. When we greet one another with open minds, we become free to express our viewpoints without fear of judgment or ridicule. We also truly listen to what others have to say, for we don't have to compare their thoughts with our own values and opinions. We're not asking you to give up your judgments. Rather, merely leave them outside the room when you enter...they'll be there to pick up after class. Suspending judgment will enable you to set aside another's appearance, age, ethnicity, gender, or behavior and instead ask yourself, 'What can I learn from this person?'

"Next, it will be helpful for us to identify our underlying assumptions which are so much a part of us that we're often unaware of them. For example, an old assumption of mine when first meeting

someone was that the person was heterosexual. Acknowledging that assumption has freed me from it." I paused here and looked around the circle. Some students were nodding understanding; others appeared to be thinking about what I had just said.

"The third dialogue building block is deep listening. Listening seems to be such a simple skill, but deep listening means hearing the underlying meaning and emotions conveyed by the speaker, as well as the words spoken, without becoming defensive or upset. When I am engaged in deep listening, I can hear a student's anger with me without rationalizing it or trivializing the person's feelings, and I can sense the student's fear of failure behind that anger. I admit that this is very hard for me to do, especially when I feel attacked. But, truly listening enables us to acknowledge the inherent worthiness of the speaker.

"Inquiry and reflection form the final building block. The intent of inquiries must be deeper understanding, not challenging what another has said or asking a question whose answer is already known. We ask open, honest questions such as, 'How did you feel about that?' or 'What options have you considered?' and pause to reflect on the meaning of what has been said. Some of us feel uncomfortable with silence, as though we have to fill up the space with words. However, a time of quiet to reflect thoughtfully allows us to absorb with our hearts and spirits, as well as with our minds, the deep meaning of what has just occurred."

Stopping at this point, I asked the students if there were any questions so far. No one said a word, which was a bit unsettling. Did their silence stem from shyness, confusion, total comprehension, or some other source that did not occur to me in these agonizing seconds? I waited a few more seconds just in case someone needed time to say something, then plunged ahead.

"There are some behaviors that have been identified that support dialogue," I explained. "One of these behaviors is a respect for differences. If you were raised in the city, it can be fun to learn about small-town life from a person whose whole high school graduating class had only eight people! Another important behavior is recognizing that we are all teachers and learners in this class. You will learn from each person, and you will teach all of us. Also, it is important to balance inquiry and advocacy. Speak up and advocate your point of view, then listen carefully as you hear others talk."

I asked the class if they would be willing to adopt these building blocks and behaviors as our ways of being with one another. They

nodded their agreement. I reinforced the point that this is a very different way of interacting with others and would probably feel strange at first. I emphasized that this is an educational setting, not group therapy, although the effects of this style of communication may indeed be therapeutic. Being heard, acknowledged, and accepted without judgment are deeply affirming and healing experiences.

Lee and I then moved to a get-acquainted exercise by giving students an index card and marker and asking them to write their first name in big letters in the middle of the card and in each corner, their birthplace, someone they love deeply, something special about themselves, and something they are looking forward to in the next months. Using masking tape, we all put our "name tags" on. Then we instructed the class to get up, mingle, learn names, and at least these four bits of information about one another.

The group rose and began talking. As always, some nervous laughter filled the air. But what happened next was unique in my experience. I walked up to one young woman and noticed that she had listed her son as a person she loves deeply.

"How old is your son?" I asked.

"He would be three years old now," she replied.

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said. "Did he have a childhood disease?"

"No," she explained, "the day after our divorce was final, my ex-husband shot and killed our son and himself." She went on to explain that this had happened a little over a year ago, and that she had spent this year talking to grief support groups and battered women's groups.

"I want to become a psychologist to help people who have been through such trauma," she said. "I really had no one to turn to."

I encouraged her to pursue her dream and moved on to meet others. The next young woman I met had been born and raised in a small Texas town until moving to Dallas six months earlier.

"I love living in Dallas," she said. "Alpine is so small, and everyone knows everyone else's business. I got a lot of pressure, being young and single with a baby. I'm so glad to be out of there!"

We talked about the comfort of anonymity, and the greater acceptance of differences in a more diverse city. She told me that her younger sister, a high school senior with borderline personality disorder, would be coming to live with her in Dallas upon graduation. We agreed that living with such an illness can be a real strain since mental illness is so misunderstood. "I want to become a psychologist and work with emotionally disturbed teenagers," she concluded.

Given these two examples, it would be easy to assume that this was a class for "troubled" students. Not at all! This mind-body health psychology class uses stress reduction as a focus for learning about the mind-body connection. We explore the theories of stress and the scientific evidence for its effect on our bodies, and we experience many traditional and alternative methods of stress reduction. Students range in age from 18 to 80. Some enroll to learn how to reduce the stress in their lives. Others need a psychology or social science credit. Some think the class seems interesting or find that it fits their schedule. And some, like the two students described, are taking the class to fulfill a requirement for a psychology degree.

At the close of that first class session as I turned out the lights and left the classroom, I reflected on this remarkable first day. Never had my students been so open with me and with one another so quickly. Did the guidelines for dialogue create a safe environment that encouraged this openness? Or would these students have shared this information anyway?

We have continued to reinforce the building blocks and behaviors for dialogue in our class. It is easy to slip into old habits of applying judgment, listening defensively, making assumptions, and fearing differences, and Lee and I have had to remind the students and ourselves about the importance of maintaining dialogue in the class. With only four weeks left in the semester, not one student has dropped. We will do an evaluation at the end of the class, asking students about the impact of these guidelines on them and the class atmosphere, and their responses will help us prepare for next semester and a new first day.

Susan Barkley *(third from right) is a teaching/administrator in World Languages, Cultures and Communication. Susan strives to create an environment that respects diversity and honors each person's unique gifts and background both in her classes and with the instructors she mentors. She is currently incorporating mind-body health principles in her introduction to travel and tourism class with the intent of helping students to overcome stress, to become more focused on learning, and to find their purpose in life.*

THE COURAGE TO LISTEN

Susan Barkley

A colleague of mine said that teaching is "the agony and the ecstasy." There are moments of pure gold when you lead students to a new threshold, and they affirm your self-worth and embrace your passion. Then you are validated. But when a student rejects the values you hold sacred, questions your credentials, and generally repudiates the importance of you and your class–this is the agony. It is much the same each semester that first day of class when both students and teachers eye each other warily, wondering if they can find common ground, apprehensive about how they are perceived and whether they will measure up. Within each heart is the plea, "Try to understand me."

In those moments, students and teachers stand poised on a battlefield each facing the same threat–rejection. Fear keeps us from connecting. What can break down the barriers and help us find common ground? I've come to think the answer may be listening. As we listen more, and listen with the heart, students feel validated and move away from a hostile posture. It is difficult to make an enemy of someone who cares. To listen in a nonjudgmental, nonintrusive way and not feel threatened as a teacher, takes practice and patience.

This year I had a particularly interesting student. She enrolled in two of my travel and tourism classes, an introductory class that exposes students to all aspects of the travel industry and a destination class that acquaints students with tourism geography to gain familiarity with destinations they will sell. I could not fathom why this student I'll call Carlene had enrolled in either class, since she seemed to have no interest in the subjects and was sullen and challenging on every point. Previously I would have pointed out the rules and goals of the class to her and even questioned her directly about her motivations for taking the course.

This semester I just listened, really listened, and tried to discover why she felt so negatively about everything. The turning point came one morning in the destination class as we were finishing the unit on Europe. "You know," she blurted out, "none of this shit interests me. I hate museums and old churches. I'm never going to get this stuff." I controlled my inclination to condescendingly reply, "Well Carlene, if you're going to be a travel consultant, you're going to have to know whether the Eiffel Tower is in Rome or Paris." But I held my tongue and acknowledged that not everyone was interested in historic places and asked what was of interest to her. She (along with the rest of the

class) seemed notably surprised that I offered no admonition about her outburst, but she remained silent.

Several weeks later when we were studying Africa, she came alive. "This is awesome!" she exclaimed. "Man, I can really see myself selling this stuff. I love this! " I wonder if Carlene would have had the same reaction to the unit on Africa if I had really "put her in her place" when we were studying Europe?

Curiously, this experience caused me to reexamine the final project. Seeing it through Carlene's eyes, I noticed that it was slanted toward a certain type of travel consultant selling to one segment of the market. I decided to move from a rather restrictive assignment to one that allowed my students to be more authentic with the project. As I reflected on their varied interests–cruise sales, marketing, packaging tours, convention planning, and incentive travel for corporations, I decided to revise the final project giving students the opportunity to choose from four options as well as the original assignment. Carlene submitted her proposal for her final project to me yesterday. She will be marketing and selling adventure tours–safaris, diving, kayaking and trekking excursions in Kenya, Bora Bora, Bali, Penang, Nepal, and Guilin–destinations that previously she had neither heard of nor had any interest in exploring.

In my classroom I have tried to create a safe place. To me that meant a place where diversity was valued and where each voice was heard. Now I have learned that a safe place is more than the environment. It is a place where students do not undermine their own gifts and abilities. How often have students sabotaged their presentations or projects, fearing rejection from the teacher or class? How often have they rejected the more interesting project or response to a question and played it safe, not risking exposure, vulnerability, or failure? Deep listening kept Carlene safe until she could develop her own courage to risk. It gave her the freedom to chart her own course–one closer to her heart's desire and more valuable to her and the world because it was touched by her own passion.

How did I get to the place where I was not defensive about students' acceptance or rejection of what I taught? I think much has come from an inward journey of valuing myself. The Fetzer retreat nurtured me in a way that made me rejoice in who I am. Cared for and listened to by colleagues who held me in their hearts, I began to understand that I don't have to prove myself. I came away with the sense that in valuing myself, in being serene in my own being, I send a message to my students that it is all right to be who you are. Looking back on that

strategic moment when I was confronted by Carlene, I had to admit that I held a kind of quiet admiration for this gutsy girl who said what she thought and didn't play it safe.

My personal journey has been one of learning to validate myself and not always trying to win recognition or acceptance from others. Just by being me, at peace with myself, I can be open to my students, see their gifts, and hear their voices. In order to be present for my students, I have tried to set aside some time before class, not to organize notes or assemble materials, but to prepare myself to receive my students. Next fall I hope to share some focusing techniques with the students, providing time in class for precious silence.

Teaching in a community college, I have come to recognize that each student has a lifetime of experience that needs to be acknowledged by the teacher. It is my belief that to draw from that pool of knowledge enriches not only me as a teacher, but all of the students in my class. I have learned to listen with wonder–wonder about where a particular student's journey will take him, wonder about the richness that this student can add to the class, and wonder about what it is that I have to offer.

I am reminded of the words of Norman Maclean in the novel *A River Runs Through It* when the father, lamenting his inability to reach his son says, "Either we don't know what part of ourselves to give or more often than not, the part we have to give is not wanted. And so it is those we live with and should know who elude us. But we can still love them. We can love completely without complete understanding."

I can open many windows for my students, but I also have to accept that these may not be the ones that will entice them or help them in their journey. Their paths may be ones that I cannot direct them to, but I can find the courage to listen well enough to help them find their paths with heart.

WE TEACH WHO WE ARE

When we returned from our retreat, we noticed that we had begun to change, become more authentic with each other and with our colleagues, students, staff, friends, and families. We noticed that we were less afraid of being vulnerable, of allowing others to know us as we were-not perfect, not invincible, but real people, sometimes sad, sometimes joyful. The surprise is that such authenticity, rather than challenging our authority and effectiveness, seems only to enhance it.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Sam Tinsley *teaches developmental math using different methods of instruction to accommodate the differing learning styles of his students. For the past four years, he has been using a computer-assisted method called mediated learning. He attends to mind-body health principles in all classes by involving students in activities aimed at making mathematics fun and more relevant to their everyday world. He assumes that students need positive, caring instruction and aims at creating a safe haven for those experiencing anxiety with the subject.*

SAM I AM

Sam Tinsley

My friends' son Todd has always called me "Sam I Am." At first I was less than pleased to be associated with a Dr. Seuss character, but after hearing it more and more, the title struck a chord in me. Now, I rather enjoy being called "Sam I Am." After all, who else am I, but Sam?

As a senior in high school, my math teacher issued me a real challenge. She was teaching a course at a local college and had a gentleman in her class who needed help with his math. She told me she had given my name to the man and had invited him to call me to be his tutor. I was flattered but mostly scared to death. However, after the first session with the man, I knew who it is I am–a teacher. My teacher's confidence in me went a long way toward helping me discover my calling.

The subject I have spent most of my life teaching is mathematics. Most of my students enter the classroom with a negative attitude about the subject. Their past encounters with math have left them feeling inadequate and confused, and trying to overcome these fears and anxieties is perhaps my biggest job as a teacher. I've come to see that showing myself as a real person teaching them this difficult subject helps many of them with those fears.

Most students have a characteristic picture in their minds of what a math teacher is like. They see us as "nerdy" types with closed minds whose only interest, in or out of the classroom, is doing math problems. Maybe they need to know I'm a real person. Maybe they need to know I like to play golf, country and western dance, jog, hike, and spend time with my family. I have danced with students in class to show how some things are done by pattern. Students remember concepts much better when they have something fun to relate them to.

My students have taught me many lessons, in fact, I feel I have learned at least as much from my students as they have from me. Hardly a day goes by that I don't hear something from a student that makes me stop, take pause, and say, "Why didn't I see it that way before?" I have learned how to more clearly explain horizontal and vertical lines when a student told me: "It's easy, just remember Van Halen!" When I let students know I am a learner too, they seem to drop some of their fears about the subject. I become another student in the classroom with them.

I have stolen ideas, not only from students, but colleagues as well. One of my favorite people in the educational world is a fellow math teacher at Eastfield College in Mesquite, Texas. Dr. Joe Allison taught me years ago to say, "MATH IS FUN." He told his classes that, and I now tell my students. You see the first three letters of the word function are . . . you get it. I try to make lessons more fun with comparisons to things students have experienced, so when working on logarithms, I talk about packing and unpacking suitcases.

Many stories from the classroom have enriched my life. One 73-year-old student explained his reason for taking my course, "I just have always wanted to know more about math." Wow! The curiosity and wonder of a man his age made me stop that day and reevaluate my teaching. He would occasionally come by my office just to visit, and in doing so reminded me of the importance of being more available for interaction with students outside of the classroom.

Another student, now a math teacher herself, was a particular inspiration to me. She eagerly wanted to know, and I wanted to share. During the semester she was in my class, I was asked to speak at a math convention, and since I couldn't find a substitute among my fellow teachers, I asked her to teach the class. She did, and from every other student in the class, I heard what a wonderful job she did.

My young friend Todd hit the nail on the head. When I enter the classroom, I am Sam. The joy and wonder of teaching still makes me excited on *most* days. I become my real self in the classroom, wanting to share some of the "neat" stuff math has shown me. I still have a "gee whiz" attitude about a lot of the topics. The fun of seeing students' eyes light up and hearing them say, "I got it!" has not ceased to thrill me.

In my opinion, being a good teacher means knowing my bright spots and my dim ones and not being afraid to reveal those to others, and this is something I need to risk practicing more. Talking about my family and those close to me and sharing my joys and fears, frustrations and wonders, doubts and certainties helps students see a real person as their teacher. I should never be afraid to let my students know who I am. They in turn can share who they are, and together we move past our fears. I guess Todd was right: *Sam I Am.*

Lee Paez's lifelong learning includes the study of languages, cultures, counseling, and meditation. At Richland College, she focuses on working in a teaching and counseling relationship with students from many backgrounds. She currently teaches Psychology of Mind-Body Health and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Lee also serves as a counselor. For three years, she has co-taught a psychology course which focuses on stress management from a mind-body-spirit perspective. She is currently incorporating a mind-body-spirit perspective into her speech course for non-native speakers.

THE PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS

Lee Paez

In February 1999, at the Fetzer Institute's retreat center, I watched as my colleagues took their places in our circle: Fred, a counselor; Becki, a chemistry professor; Sam, a math professor; Steve, our college president; Mary Frances, an English professor; 25 of us in all. The room quieted as Marianne, our wonderful facilitator, lit three candles and invited us to join in silence for a few minutes to quiet our minds, so we could be mindfully present for one another. In silence, we began a process that would lead to our teacher/leader formation work together: work that we hoped would transform our lives, our teaching, and our community by helping us have the courage to teach from our deepest selves. I closed my eyes, breathed, and smiled inwardly.

I watch the students in our psychology of mind-body health class enter the classroom: Patricia (fictitious student names), in her late twenties, whose ex-husband shot and killed himself and her 2 year old son just a year ago; Evan, 33, who is recovering from a severe brain injury; Michael, 19, one of our star baseball players who suffers from asthma; Carole, 21, who just moved from a small town to Dallas with her infant child to escape an abusive ex-husband; Jack, 75, who lost his wife of 50 years just four months ago. They, 14 other students, my co-teacher Sue Jones, and I form our community of learners this semester. As soon as everyone is settled, Sue smiles and raises a chime in her left hand and invites us all to sit mindfully in silence for a few minutes. Sue gently asks us to let go of thoughts and feelings that might distract us from being fully present during the class. I close my eyes, breathe, and release. It is my favorite part of class.

❦

Curious about the work of Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese monk and teacher, Rica, a writing professor, Luke, a philosophy professor, and I attended our first mindfulness retreat in 1992. Walking into the zendo, we carefully watched the other retreatants select pillows and gracefully sit down in a full lotus position. Trying not to appear a novice to the practice, I imitated the others' postures, not realizing that in a few minutes my leg muscles would cramp, my knees complain, my back ache, and my feet become numb. I heard Thich Nhat Hanh's voice from time to time, leading us in a guided meditation, but mostly I simply focused on the extreme discomfort in my body. I opened my eyes

slightly to view the other retreatants all sitting calmly, with half smiles on their faces, breathing and meditating. I alone was suffering and wishing the 20 minutes to be over. I alone was a failure at meditation.

I open my suitcase and take out the pillows I have brought for my students. I arrange the pillows in a circle on the carpet inside the larger circle of desks and invite students who would like to learn how to sit during meditation to join me on the floor. Seven of the younger, more agile students join me. Sue, Jack, and the rest of the students straighten their backs in their desks as I explain how the back must remain straight during the meditation. I encourage the students on the floor to raise their buttocks high enough so that they can cross their legs comfortably. I remind everyone that they need not sit in a perfect lotus position in order to meditate effectively and that finding a comfortable position in which they can sit for 20 minutes is the key. I turn on the guided meditation tape I made earlier. We sit. After 20 minutes, the tape ends, I open my eyes and smile when I see them all sitting there in the same postures. I am proud of them for doing what I once found so difficult.

❦

In the spring of 1994, I stood outside the kitchen in the light rain waiting for breakfast at a retreat center near Houston. We filed into the warm kitchen lured by the smell of fresh coffee, oranges, and cinnamon. Hungry, I filled my bowl with homemade cinnamon-apple oatmeal, piled on a cranberry nut muffin, and took a ripe banana. When we were all seated, the leader invited the bell to signal that we might begin eating. I looked deeply into my oatmeal, my muffin, my banana. I saw the fields of golden oats dancing in the breeze, the cranberry marshes, the Texas pecan trees, the banana palms of Honduras, where I visited a friend when he was in the Peace Corps. I thought of all the hard, human labor involved in planting, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, and preparing this food. I marveled that it sat there in front of me. As I looked deeply, I saw that the food before me was made of the nutrients of the soil, water, and sunshine. As was I. We were one. I slowly raised a spoonful of oatmeal to my mouth. I chewed slowly twenty-five times, savoring the flavors. Thirty minutes later, my hunger satiated, I stared at the half-eaten bowl of cereal, the uneaten muffin, and the unpeeled banana. I wondered if I would be able to finish my meal. I regretted that my eyes were bigger than my stomach. I breathed and broke open my muffin.

Our students pass the three small plates on which I have carefully arranged raisins, peanuts, and chocolate kisses. They select one of each and place them on their empty plates. I ask them to look at their raisin first, to feel its texture; smell it; imagine it once being a bud on a grapevine, growing slowly, nourished by soil, water, and sun; to consider the tremendous amount of technological and human energy it took to plant, grow, harvest, transport, dry, package, purchase, and bring that raisin to our plates. I tell them to put the raisin in their mouths and without biting into the raisin, to notice how it tastes and feels. Then, I ask them to begin slowly chewing the raisin as many times as they can chew, perhaps twenty times, without swallowing. A few of them laugh quietly, but they continue trying to focus on their raisins, practicing eating meditation. We slowly eat the peanut and finally the chocolate kiss. My mouth waters as the familiar chocolate flavor stimulates my tastebuds. We finish eating; our plates are empty. I ask them to write for a few minutes about their experience with eating meditation.

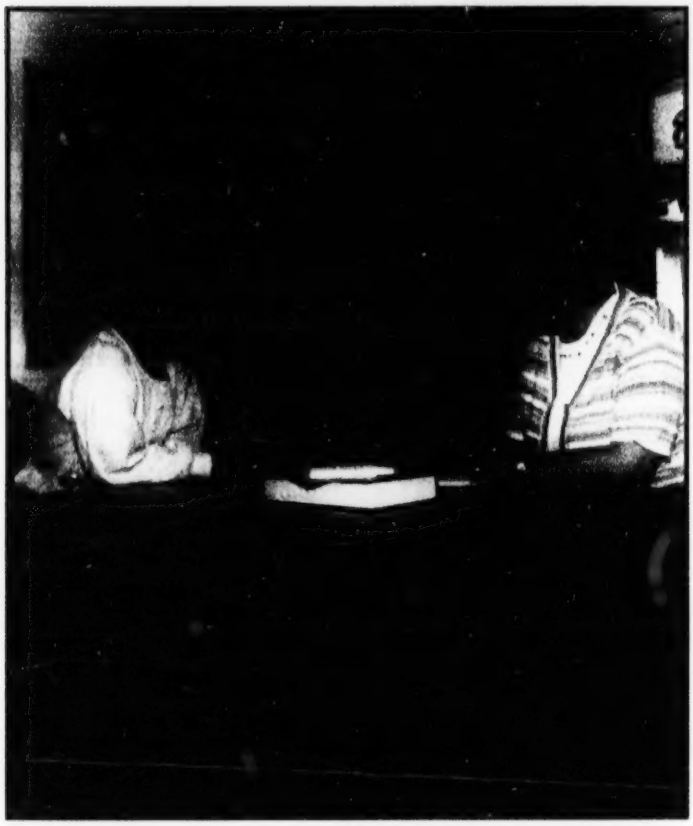
❦

On New Year's Day of 1996, I was in Plum Village in France with my family at a mindfulness retreat. The frigid wind blew across the field where we gathered to practice walking meditation before lunch. Thich Nhat Hanh, surrounded as he often is by children, reached down, took two small hands, and began walking across the frozen ground. Breathe in, left foot, breathe out, right foot. I followed him, trying to keep the same pace as the group. I was freezing. My nose dripped, and my fingers were numb inside my mittens. It was difficult for me already, and I knew the walking meditation would last at least forty minutes. I considered turning around and going into the kitchen to sit by the warm wood stove. My daughter reached out for my hand. We walked together, matching our breathing and our steps. Thich Nhat Hanh led us down a small path on one side of the meadow. For a minute the sun peeked out from the clouds, striking the ice on the pine needles. It was so beautiful that my eyes filled with tears. We returned to the meadow, and Thich Nhat Hahn led us in the opposite direction from the warm kitchen. "Oh no," I said to myself, " he is taking us further away, and at this pace it will take at least an hour to get back. By then I will be frozen." I considered turning back, but I didn't want to leave my daughter. He led us across the meadow to his small hut where he stopped, smiled, and motioned us in. "How is this possible?" I wondered, " How can forty of us fit inside that tiny hut?" We sat in

silence, cross-legged on the floor, and our bodies warmed the space. We were warm, and we fit. We were aware that it was a great honor to be invited into Thic Nhat Hanh's hut. I felt so thankful for not turning back. As we left the hut and walked together mindfully back to the dining area, I still felt warm, and I smiled.

It is April in Dallas before the summer heat begins. The mind-body health class members walk quietly to the horticulture department's Japanese garden, which is in full and glorious bloom. As we arrive, I remind them to step with their left foot on their in-breath and their right foot on their out-breath. I tell them that walking meditation will feel awkward at first but to be patient. James takes off his shoes and socks and walks on the pebbled path. I follow his lead and feel the small warm pebbles on my bare feet. I feel so connected to the earth. Ann stops to observe a butterfly plant. Heather stands on the small bridge and looks deeply into the small pond. Two students giggle. I remind myself that this is a new and difficult practice for them and keep myself from feeling critical and judgmental. There are always a couple of students who are unable to handle such silence. I see Sue across the garden looking at a honeybee. She is smiling and at peace.

As I reflect on the practice of meditation, I am reminded of how much my experience of myself and of the world has broadened as I learned sitting, eating, and walking meditation. I am thankful for the new ways I have been taught to walk, to view, and to experience the world. I am also reminded how difficult it is for all of us to learn something new, to change habits, to look at the world from a different perspective. I recognize that the learning process is often uneven, full of failure, and laborious. I look with new eyes at my students, my colleagues, and myself, and I smile.



Herlinda Martinez Coronado *(center) has just completed her first year as Vice President of Student Learning at Richland College. Before coming to Dallas, she served as Vice President for Instruction at the Community College of Denver (CO) and Dean of Instruction at South Plains College (TX). She was a founding faculty member of El Paso Community College where she taught reading and ESL. Linda's recent move to Dallas brings her closer to her family, all residents of Texas. Floral design is a favorite hobby of hers.*

WHO ARE YOU, AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

Herlinda Martinez Coronado

One of the very first activities we enjoyed together during our opening session at the Fetzer Institute centered on two fundamental questions: "Who are you?" and "What are you doing here?" Did I use the word "enjoy"? The exercise ended with enjoyment, but it didn't begin that way. I felt that initial pang of anxiety–What should I say? How much of myself should I reveal?

We had some time to reflect, and then the sharing began. The group consisted of 21 teachers and 4 administrators, many of whom had been employed at the college for at least 20 years. I was the junior member, boasting a full 8 months of employment at the college.

I listened to responses from many of my new colleagues, and then it was my turn. Who am I? I began with my name and title–from the known to the unknown. During my time to reflect, I had drawn a diagram that emerged looking like a petaled flower. I talked about my diagram, petal by petal. Professional and personal background were quickly and easily shared–academic credentials, work history, decision points that guided the course of my professional life. Now to the personal–single parent, mother, grandmother, florist, Latina, only child, teacher, learner, daughter.

When I reached the point of describing myself as an administrator or a teacher, I felt a familiar struggle. We sometimes get caught up in the limited perspective of two worlds in higher education–the faculty and the administration. I have struggled with this dichotomy ever since I chose to accept titles such as "director" or "dean," but I have come to the realization that whether I am in the classroom or the conference room, it is teaching and learning that bring unity to my work. And beyond that, it is through continued exploration and understanding of self that I can more fully comprehend the meaning of the word educator, which is how I define my profession.

I emerged from the ranks of the faculty. Teaching and learning are a part of who I am. I've taught ten sections in the long term and two five-week sessions in the summer. I've taken release time to develop curriculum. I've worked with hundreds of students each semester. Learning names. Hearing their life stories. Analyzing skill levels. Testing. Assigning readings and homework. Checking papers. Worrying about how they will fare in the next course. I've experienced those bittersweet good-byes at the end of the semester. Graduation. Will I ever see my students again? Wondering if I made a difference,

even in some small way. How many lives were influenced? Made better? Made worse if my students didn't reach their goals?

And so, that day as we all shared our identities, I was determined to communicate the importance of the teaching and learning that is central to my life. Who am I? I am a teacher and a learner even though I may work in a different arena-that of the meeting room, the conference room, the office, the parking lot–sometimes a facilitator, sometimes a participant, with a curriculum consisting of values, communication, problem solving, community building, and change.

One instance of my teaching was a gathering of our student assistants in a classroom. We met to recognize their contributions and the important roles they play throughout the institution. We read the values of our institution together and talked about the ways in which their work reflected these values. Peer tutors in the Multicultural Center provide support and practice for our international students. Technical support staff members maintain our hardware, install and update software, and teach staff the fine points of using their equipment and technology resources. Student assistants in the science labs prepare lab setups and monitor safety for students. And student assistants serve on the front lines throughout our college. We talked about values such as mutual trust, honesty, fairness, and open communication. We considered the values of cooperation, diversity, creativity, and responsible risk taking. Our favorite was the value of joy in the workplace. That day I learned more about the many responsibilities and contributions of our student assistants while they examined our organizational values.

My office is still another place for teaching and learning. When I hear student concerns, I often have the opportunity to teach them about how to discuss their academic problems with faculty. I instruct them about college policy. I often teach about degree requirements, our graduate guarantee, and academic suspension. I won't forget the student who called to ask about the possibility of having her grade changed. Early in her college career, she had not taken her classes seriously as she struggled with drugs and alcohol and had received several failing grades. She had subsequently been through treatment and had struggled to make a living. Twelve years later she was seeking admission to a program in a health-related field. The "F" on her transcript in biology was detrimental, particularly since she had taken the course over in later years and successfully completed it. The Academic Forgiveness Policy provided her with the solution she was seeking, and it was content, provided in our catalog, that I was pleased to teach.

My curriculum is also one of problem solving. I meet weekly with the Academic Council made up of the deans of all the instructional divisions, the dean of information technology, and the president of our faculty association. This group represents the key instructional leadership of the campus. The conference room is the place where we hold our class in cooperative learning in which many perspectives and areas of expertise are shared. For example, the deans at the college have been instrumental in teaching me the details of the scheduling of classes in our facility. They know the characteristics of the rooms and the faculty and students who use them. In turn, we have examined together the relationship between class schedule, faculty load, and use of facilities with the goal of increasing the efficient use of all our resources.

Problem solving, information sharing, and negotiating dominate in this classroom. The content of our classes is permeated by a continuing search for solutions. How can we best use technology for teaching and learning? Where are the strengths and weaknesses of our instructional programs? What can we do to strengthen the advising system? How do we engage those in the institution who may have distanced themselves? How do we prioritize? What must we do to remain responsive to our community?

Sometimes my teaching takes the form of linking one group at the college with another. For example, the director of the art gallery is developing an art gallery management program. The assistant dean of technical programs has great expertise in doing labor market analysis to determine the viability of new programs based on labor market demand, potential numbers of openings, average earnings, and projected need. It is my job to bring these individuals together as a part of the new program development team.

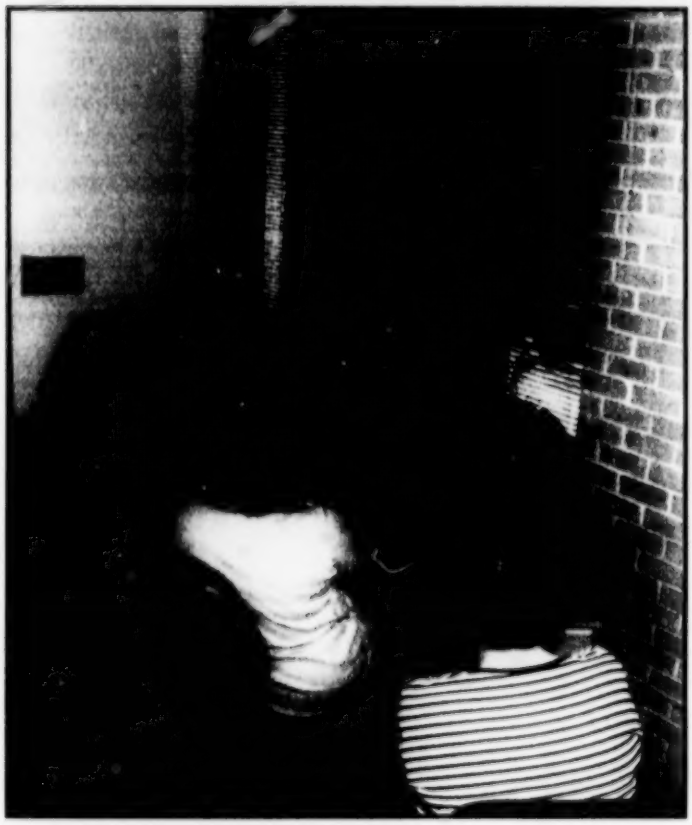
A significant part of my work revolves around change and the relationships that must be supported and nurtured as these transformations take place. The reactions and events aren't always smooth. During major change, I find that careful listening and questioning is critical. People don't always feel good about the changes because their work world is disrupted. I have to be able to justify the reasons, and I have to be willing to modify my thinking as I receive input from those affected. Part of my role is to serve as a buffer, and I can only be successful in that role if I am convinced that the change is justified. I have to know myself, understand the vision of our president, and sort substance from unhappiness as I listen to the advice and concerns of my colleagues. I also have to be mindful and respectful

of the feelings of those affected. Division offices and hallways often become makeshift classrooms for teaching and learning about organizational structure, staffing patterns, job duties, and workplace relationships.

Part of our most recent reorganization resulted in moving student organizations out from my umbrella of responsibility to that of the vice president of student services. Frequent communication was called for, and I failed to close one loop–the reporting structure for the student newspaper. Understandably, the dean responsible for this area was upset. He was being asked to give his staff some direction and continuity but couldn't do that until he had clarification about the reporting structure for this workgroup. It was important for me to hear his concerns, to include the vice president of student services in the discussion, and to communicate the decision based on our discussion. In this instance, my office was the classroom, and I was the learner as the dean explained his dilemma and the consequences of the missing communication.

I often think back on our first session in Kalamazoo when we gathered together and a discussion of significance began: "Who are you? What are you doing here?" These two fundamental and profound questions return whenever I meet with a new group, when I revisit a group, when I have a new project or challenge, when I am faced with a difficult decision.

"Who are you?" I am a college administrator, a teacher, a learner, a person. "What are you doing here?" I am discovering the college and its people, designing curriculum, finding and using the many classrooms available to me in the form of conference rooms, offices, and hallways. I am teaching, learning, and helping to build community.



Kay Coder *(standing) teaches sociology by using various cultural perspectives to help students develop an understanding of the social influences on their own behavior and that of others. Using cooperative learning techniques, she has taught Introductory Sociology, Marriage and Family, and American Minorities. She emphasizes inner awareness–why we think, feel, and behave the way we do when we interact with those who are different. Kay also facilitates diversity training workshops and teaches wellness line dancing. Her lifelong focus is on building understanding, acceptance, and community across cultures.*

CONNECTIONS: MY STUDENT/MY SELF

Kay Coder

What was it about Lauren that drew me to her when she was in my Introduction to Sociology class last semester? She was bright, articulate, curious, passionate, and confident with the courage to ask difficult questions publicly in a class of 70-80 students. In discussions with her, I began to realize parallels with my own life. She too was a woman of color returning to college in her thirties, not sure of what direction to take although passionate about wanting to make a positive difference–so much like myself at her age, only more confident than I ever was.

I was thrilled to find that she was taking my American Minorities class this semester. This class focuses on looking within ourselves as we learn about others who are different and is based on the idea that the journey to understanding others begins with understanding ourselves. I soon came to realize how much Lauren would add to my own consciousness as she embarked on her quest.

It was the first class after I had returned from the Fetzer Institute. For our unit on the American Indian culture, we had a guest lecturer who was very poetic, using narrative metaphors as she shared her personal stories. In the course of the discussion, Lauren leaned forward in her chair and directly asked our guest the question, "So how is your experience as an American Indian any different from mine as an African American?" The class was silent. Lauren's words sounded confrontational and seemed to put our speaker on the defensive. I wanted to jump in and neutralize the tension, to protect our speaker as well as Lauren from any embarrassment or misunderstanding that may have occurred. The silence was deafening, so I tried to soften the question by rewording it, but I only intensified the situation. Lauren flashed me a look that showed she felt betrayed, and I realized that I had to back off and let the students work through the tension on their own. They finally did come to a point of understanding, but there was still some level of unease, or maybe I was the only one who felt uncomfortable.

I called Lauren the next day under the pretense of wanting to inform her of upcoming events, but really wanting to apologize. She was ahead of me. When I brought up the subject of what had happened in class the previous day, she immediately said, "You know Kay, I prayed on it and pondered over it, and then I thought, Kay's blue! In fact, the way you teach this class is TOO blue for me!"

I guess I should explain this. Last semester, several of my students attended a workshop called "True Colors" with four colors–gold, green, blue, and orange–representing different personality types. The theory has it that each person has all four types, but some are more dominant than others. As luck would have it, Lauren and I were exact opposites in order of color dominance–her dominant color was green and blue was her weakest; blue was my dominant color and green my least dominant. In brief, green represents the rational, systematic, fact-finding part of our personalities, and blue the idealistic, emotional, relationship-oriented aspect.

While I was trying to find a way to apologize to her, Lauren, in her green, logical mode, had already analyzed the situation and realized that the incident happened because of our differences in personality. She saw no need for an apology at all. Lauren also pointed out that since she is green, she needs facts, not that "touchy-feely stuff." Our speaker's message was also "blue," and Lauren wanted clarification in "green" terminology, not poetic metaphor.

But that wasn't the only lesson I learned from her that day. As Parker Palmer explains in *The Courage to Teach*, "We teach who we are." My blue side was concerned about hurt feelings. I learned that I must recognize and accept who I am, and others will too. I don't need to apologize for being my true self in the classroom. The incident also affected Lauren as she wrote in her journal:

I have learned to trust my intuitions more and more. Although I did not have facts and figures to back up my respect for American Indians, I have always believed that they were deserving of my admiration and respect. Now I have facts to go with my intuition and my green and blue are in perfect harmony.

As Lauren was writing in her journal about coming to terms with issues about her own race and ethnicity, I realized I was still on my own journey of awareness about mine. In her summary of the film on racism, *The Color of Fear*, Lauren wrote:

The emotions were high, and I was swept away. Some of my own fears were identified in that film, and I remember being angry that they were identified and brought out in the open in mixed company. I guess I have not grown as much as I believed because at this very moment, I am angry. Maybe I really need to see The Color of Fear *again in order to heal some wounds that are very tender and a little fresher than I imagined. (You know, I do not like this.*

Now I have unfinished business. This isn't about the grade anymore. This is actually about growth and healing.)

Knowledge is power, and time heals wounds that you do not know exist. For the first time in my life, I am able to hear and experience my culture with the knowledge and pride that I can and will make a difference. Not only for the people who look like me, or have been subjugated to the injustices of this society, but for those who are different from me in every way.

Knowledge is power and when you have power, you are able to look at yourself and others and see things not only as they are now, but how they can be. You are able to see faults, but with power you also see solutions. Power and truth give you the ability to get up and go on to achieve your goals, and most important, give you the ability to no longer hold a grudge:

As I read Lauren's powerful words, I reflected back to the first impact that watching the film *The Color of Fear* had on me in dealing with my own cultural issues. I had been raised with the Japanese saying, "The nail that stands up will be hammered down," which meant I was never to draw attention to myself or to "rock the boat." It was my duty as a Japanese daughter to conform and fit in with the larger group, whether it was my immediate family or the dominant American society. However, when I saw this powerful film, I was furious, saddened, and in tears. It brought back years of hurt and pain that had never been spoken or acknowledged. I realized that there were many things that I only thought I had overcome, and I had a long way to go to heal old wounds. I also knew that I could no longer be silent, but must go against my cultural upbringing and do something–anything–to stop racism. I had to make a difference, or else I was part of the problem. This dual role, the dutiful, obedient conformer and the diligent diversity crusader, still causes me to be unsure of who I am to this day.

There has been an ongoing conflict between my mother and me since I moved to the U.S. I am constantly trying to find a balance between my Japanese and American selves to find my "true" self. As I anxiously awaited my mother's next visit from Japan during the course of Lauren's class, I began recognizing how much my mother's culture had influenced her view of the world and me. Perhaps I have created my problems with her when I did not take into account our differences in culture and age. I perceive my mother's criticism from my emotional, feeling perspective (that darn blue part of me that my

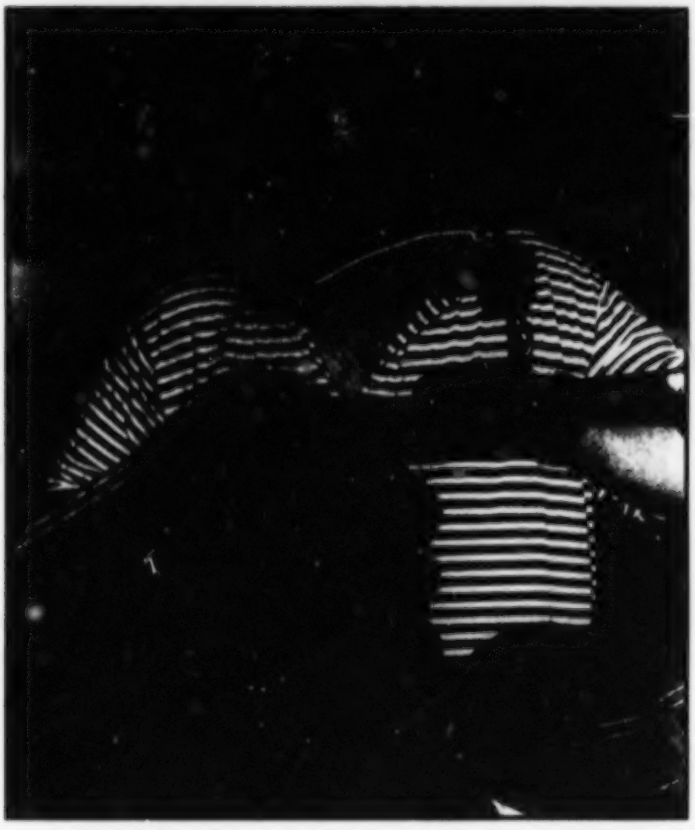
mother has tried to get rid of since I was a child), as well as my individualistic, Americanized side. My perfectionist, authoritative mother does not mean to hurt my feelings; she is just being my collectivist Japanese mother. I am clearly letting go of some grudges of my own.

Through Lauren's journal, I also learned how others can interpret the cultural trait of collectivism, the importance of belonging to the group rather than attending to individual needs, as indifference. Lauren wrote in her journal that she was angry to learn that the Japanese did not fight along with African-Americans for civil rights during the 1960s, but chose to ride among the whites on the buses. She could not see that it was not a choice, but a cultural dictate to do so.

Lauren and I are so much alike, yet we are so different. We both have a strong connection with our phenomenal mothers, who taught us how to succeed in the dominant culture while still retaining and having pride in our own. With Lauren as my teacher, I am able to look at myself with new eyes and confidence, as well as recognize and nurture the parts of my personality that are nondominant.

So many people touch us, and I must not forget to be willing to make those connections. I must have the courage to reach out, give of myself, let others know who I really am, and get to know their hearts and perspectives. I cannot be afraid to look inward, do some self-examination, be vulnerable, and take a good look at myself through another's eyes.

-Student's name used with permission-



***Mike Miles** has been a instructor of physical education at Richland College since 1975, working primarily in the fitness and aquatics programs. Over the past eight years, Mike has developed adaptive physical fitness and aquatic classes. He notes that when students are engaged as a whole mind-body entity, their commitment and their health benefits are enhanced. Mike teaches special sections for students with traumatic brain injury and works extensively with emeritus students.*

AS WE PASS, WE PASS ALONG

Mike Miles

It may be accidental
It may be incidental,
Or it may be very purposeful,
As we pass, we pass along.
I pray simply that it is to be of service to good.

This is the first poem I have ever written, and I composed it on my last day at the Fetzer Institute. For me, it is filled with meaning that I am now more able to feel fully and express as a result of my teacher formation experience. Let me share some of the meaning it has for me.

My dad passed away on December 5, 1998. I remember him as the "tough old coot" I dearly loved and miss terribly. Probably by today's standards, he would be judged an abusive parent with a heavy hand. All my life I feared him and the retribution he exacted upon me for my actions. What my siblings and I did was quite normal, but the punishment we received was not. In spite of that, I loved him. He was my father. There were times in my life that I even felt safe within his arms. But I mostly remember feeling afraid, so feeling safe "within his arms" instead of "within his grasp" is very powerful for me.

When he died, my oldest brother wrote our father's obituary, and when I read it, I wept. My father had done so many wonderful things in his life. He had extended himself for others many times, and the love in his heart for humanity was huge. Why such a dichotomy of behavior? A side in the dark, a side in the light. What was driving him? I now believe his motivations were always good; however, the delivery often was not. It was painful, and I was angry for a long time. Only now is there understanding.

I feel that his upbringing was very similar to the way he raised us, and he was dealing with life as best he knew how. His woundedness was our woundedness. I really do wish that I could have known my father more fully when he was alive. He shaped our lives through ways that were both positive and negative. Parker Palmer in *The Courage to Teach* talks about fear in our classrooms. My father taught me that fear, and I bring it with me into my teaching. I believe the thoughts are, "Will the students like me?" or "Will I be acceptable to them?" That is my fear. What fears do my students bring with them to the classroom? How does it affect what they hear and receive from me?

I used to hide behind the screen of objectivity. I now see myself much more clearly and feel that I can better understand my actions and reactions

to the people around me–to my students and to my colleagues. My efforts now are to make connections rather than to deny my humanity.

How we interact teaches in so many ways. In my scuba diving classes, there will usually be a student who simply cannot grasp the concept of profiling dive tables, which is an essential tool to prevent problems with decompression sickness in scuba and must be learned. How frustrating it must be for that student to know this and not be able to perform the task. I have found that an opportunity usually shows up for me to make a mistake when I am at the blackboard in front of the class demonstrating dive table profiling. Of course it occurs when I am engaging that particular student in the profiling task. The mistake is discovered by the student who then helps me see and correct it. Confidence starts to come quickly then, and at that point, so does learning. What I am doing is simply being human and connecting with the struggling student.

As we pass, we pass along . . .

In addition to being a son and teacher, I am also a single parent of a 14-year-old daughter. Her mother and I divorced in 1994, and Alex lives with me. If ever there was an opportunity to learn from someone, this is it. Fourteen year olds know it all, tell you where you are wrong and what you need to do about it, and make their own rules of engagement. As Alex's parent, I find that I must think of someone else's emotional and physical needs before my own. I also need to be aware that a word spoken, even in jest, can be devastating to a young girl. A teasing, "You mean you like that boy?" becomes "You make poor choices and cannot trust yourself"–a message never intended yet felt deeply. I hold her head and heart in my hands, and I must treat them with great consideration to help her grow into the person she can become. When I make mistakes, and they do happen, she has shown me unconditional love and understanding with a hug or a head on my shoulder that says I am still OK with her. I am her father; I am shaping her, yet she is also shaping me.

I am coming to realize that this same opportunity to teach and to be taught exists in all relationships, including those with the students in our classrooms. Teaching the subject matter is only a part of what we do as teachers. Parker Palmer reminds us, "We teach who we are." I used to think that a great teacher was one who knew the subject and the techniques to get the material across to the students. Who and what the students were just did not matter that much because knowledge of the subject and technique would rule the day. However, who the

students are and where they are "coming from" and who we are and where we are "coming from" as teachers, does matter. How I interact with students has a profound effect. My students are no different than my daughter. I need to engage them, involve them, and nurture them in order to help them become the people they are intended to be.

As we pass, we pass along. . .

Part of my teaching responsibilities is a fitness program for students with disabilities. Most of my students have brain injuries, the result of severe trauma. Occasionally, the brain injury was self-inflicted by drug abuse or a gunshot. Several of my students have other disabilities brought about by cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, or the complications of a disease such as diabetes mellitus. Each student has unique physical and emotional needs for which I must develop a movement and fitness program.

The physical element of the program is a given, but it is essential that I take into consideration the emotional challenges as well. I am sure many of these students are angry and bitter. They remember what they used to be and how they could perform both mentally and physically, but now many of those things are denied them. Some have total mental capabilities, but no control over their bodies. Their minds are prisoners in "less than" bodies. If what I do is going to benefit them physically, then I must connect with them in a way that is beyond the physical world.

We work hard together. We sweat together. We laugh together. We fall down together. We cry together. And most important, we get back up together. These students have taught me. They make me better than I am, and I am forever grateful for their inclusion in my life.

It may be accidental,
It may be incidental,
Or it may be very purposeful . . .

Who we are, what we are, and what we bring to the gathering is so very important. We cannot disconnect from our wholeness in our learning settings if true growth is to take place. We are not teachers, students, colleagues–we are all learners.

I pray simply that it is to be of service to good.

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UNDER THE SURFACE: OUR STORIES

At the heart of the classroom and the meeting room is the story of each person who sits in it. Sometimes the story is known or becomes known; often, it does not. But the way in which our story interacts with those we teach and lead and the way in which students' stories affect their ability to learn is perhaps the most challenging and elusive aspect of the teaching/learning situation.

As each of us took time for ourselves at the *Seasons* retreat center, we examined our own stories privately and sometimes publicly. The safety of the situation made it possible to do either with total assurance.

At the same time, we shared stories of students–our dark times as well as bright ones. And each time, we saw ourselves.

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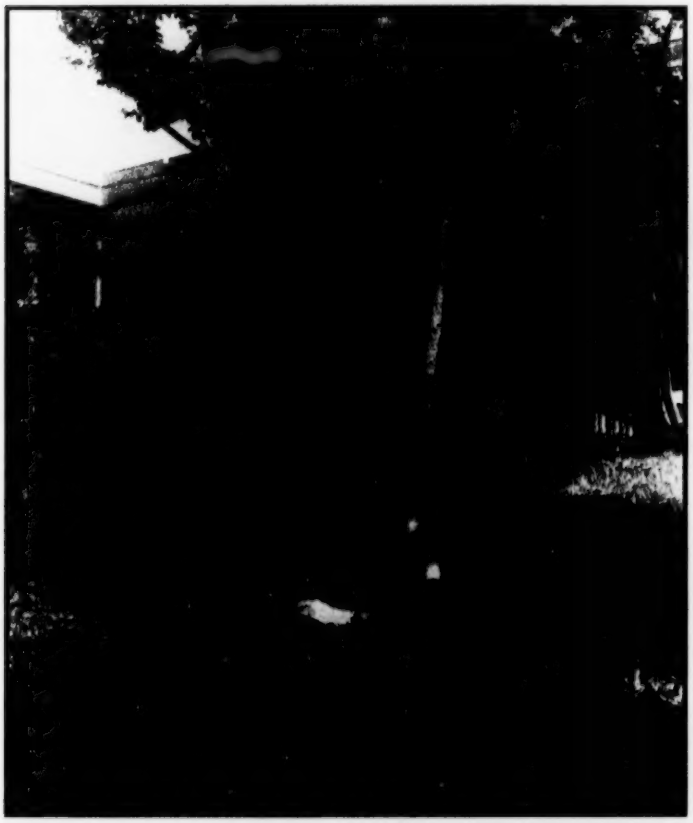

Al Schroeder *teaches introductory computer science and developmental mathematics and also serves as a faculty advisor. He has participated in mind-body health activities at Richland College since the program started, and he is incorporating a more holistic approach to teaching and learning into all his classes. Al's lifelong endeavor is to look up, not down, to move forward, not backward, and to encourage others to do the same, regardless of circumstances.*

A TIME TO GROW
Al Schroeder

While at the Fetzer Institute, I walked in the forest. I explored the landscape, from the tree-covered hills to the small lake sheltered among them. I saw life's balance, intertwined in a harmony that surpasses the imagination. As I looked at the landscape of the forest, I saw that each tree was different in size and height. Each was shaped by its surrounding environment, which included space for growth and the availability of nutrients such as water and light.

As I walked in the forest, I explored, in my mind's eye, the classroom and the individuals in it. In the classroom, we find a landscape that is created collectively by the students and the teacher. We also find that each student is distinct from the others, shaped by the personal environment of the past. As I envisioned students in the classroom, I drifted back to a time when my personal landscape was not as clear.

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I saw a student who, upon leaving his small country school at the end of the third grade to attend fourth grade in the local community, was sent home for not wearing shoes. His father, a ninth-grade dropout who owned a small business in the community, said, "I'm not surprised. They are always trying to tell you how to run your life." His mother, a teacher in the small country school, said, "You can't wear your Sunday shoes. I'll get you a pair." The student could only have felt that his mother didn't know the system, his father didn't believe in it, and that he was not ready to deal with it. But when he returned to school wearing shoes, the teachers made a space for him, nurtured him, and in time he grew.

❦

I saw a student who started smoking at the age of 11 and started drinking at the age of 14. He ignored his teachers and his assignments, as well as his own health and safety. As he struggled his way through high school, he abused the school system and his health. He had no interest in the educational environment, and his grades reflected it. But his high school teachers did not give up on him. They made a space for him, nurtured him, and in time he grew.

❦

I saw a student who was blessed with only one sibling, an older brother. He looked to his older brother for support and guidance, but his brother was prone to violence and was often in trouble, first with their parents, then with the school system. His brother eventually dropped out of high school and joined the armed services. He did not fit in and was discharged before his service was completed.

At age 20, his brother seemed more settled. He married and began a family. His first child, however, was diagnosed with leukemia shortly after birth and died when six months old. Unable to cope with yet another setback, his brother took his life, leaving the student alone and confused at the age of 17.

The student lost hope in the system. After finishing high school, he left home and worked at a low-wage clerical job. But he attended a trade school at night, and the instructors made a space for him, nurtured him, and in time he grew.

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I saw a student who had been called to war by his country, against his own will. Feeling he should do the right thing, he accepted being drafted into military service and then being trained to be a medic. By the age of 21, he was with an infantry unit, making combat air assaults into enemy territory in Vietnam.

He made two friends, one a lieutenant and the other a private. The lieutenant was a soldier's soldier. He stood over 6 feet tall and weighed over 200 pounds. He was well trained, confident, and ambitious. Like a young puppy, the lieutenant was anxious to explore and eager to be involved. The private was much like the student, plucked from the proverbial nest before he could fly. He looked at life as a casual game of cat and mouse that somehow always seemed to have a storybook ending. The private had no ambition, except to do his job, count the days, and go home.

Not long into his tour, the student's company was taking an overnight break on a firebase when it was unexpectedly called to support another company that was pinned down under heavy enemy fire. The lieutenant was on the first lift of choppers late that afternoon, and, while leading a ground assault on the enemy's flank, was cut down by enemy rifle fire. The student, who was on the second lift of choppers later that evening, learned that the lieutenant was dead, and

his body was on enemy-held ground. He spent the night sitting with his head in his hands, blindly staring into the darkness, not wanting to believe what he had heard. His friend was gone.

At the break of dawn, during another ground assault into the area, he recovered the cold and stiff body of the lieutenant. He dragged the corpse away from the fire lanes, to a makeshift landing zone, and put it on a chopper to be sent home.

Less than two weeks after the lieutenant was killed, the student was awakened during the night by an explosion and by large clods of dirt falling on him. A misdirected artillery shell from the firebase supporting their perimeter had hit a foxhole, about 20 yards away. His second friend, the private, yelled "Medic!" As he reached the private and shined a light on him, the student saw the gaping holes in his limp torso and the mass of blood that, only hours before, had been his friend's face. The student tended the wounds, as best he could, knowing in his heart what he couldn't let his mind believe. His other friend was gone.

Another medic found the body of a second soldier from the foxhole, killed instantly by the artillery shell. The student, helped by others in the company, put his friend and the second soldier on a med-evac chopper. A third soldier from the foxhole was missing.

As dawn slowly crept over the horizon, the student began collecting the scattered pieces of the third soldier, many of them no larger than a good-sized tomato. He wrapped the pieces of flesh and bones in a poncho and put the poncho on a chopper that was delivering food to the company. That was when he realized that he was standing at the crossroads of heaven and hell. He spent nine more months there before he could return home.

Saddled with the scars of war, the student was cast back into a world that didn't know him. He was labeled as being on the wrong side and blamed rather than acknowledged for having served his country. He saw no real hope to reconcile these contradictions. However, in the months that followed, he began attending college. His professors made a space for him, nurtured him, and in time he grew.

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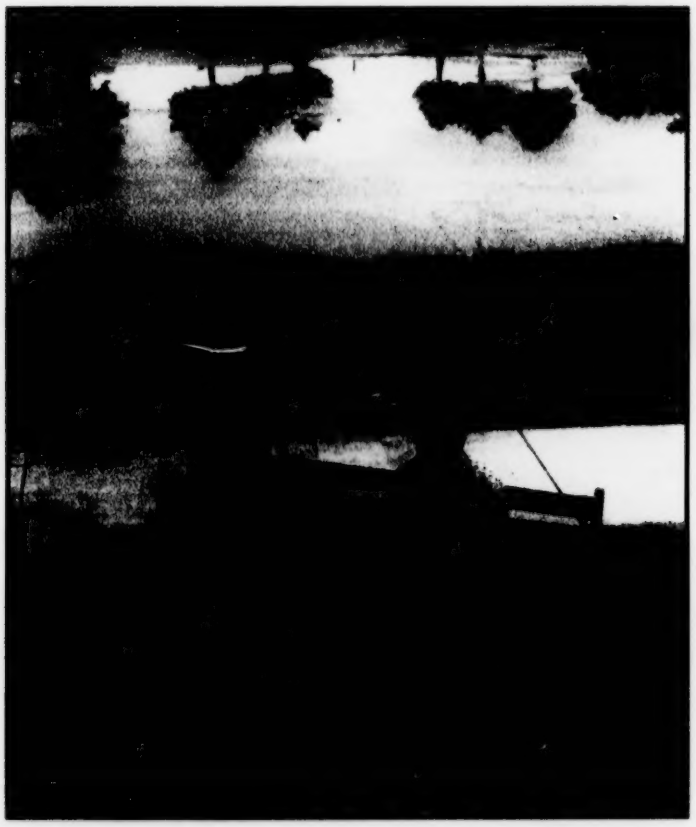
These were not the stories of the classroom landscape shared in the work group while at Fetzer. These were the stories of my personal landscape I shared only with myself, walking alone in the forest and writing at night on the balcony of my room as I quietly gazed into the

midnight skies. These are stories that linger in my mind as I walk down the hallways of the college campus. These are stories that echo in my ear as I glance into the eyes of the students in my classroom because these are their stories too.

The beauty of Fetzer was that it integrated the activities with the environment in ways that allowed me to study the landscape of the classroom while in the work group and my own personal inner landscape when alone. Because of the nurturing atmosphere at the retreat, I was able to explore both without guilt, or shame, or judgment, or blame. I feel that the process of writing for release and analysis that was presented at Fetzer and in follow-up meetings with my work group at Richland allowed me to explore with greater clarity events from more than 30 years ago. These are personal memories that I seldom dwell on, rarely talk about, and have never written about until now.

As I contemplate potential classroom changes for next fall, I'll remember the young trees growing in the forest and their struggle to reach the canopy that symbolizes the mature forest of the future. I'll remind myself that even with the years of study and the years of teaching experience that I have, I cannot predict which of this generation's saplings will be the next generation's forest. I'll remind myself that, while the classroom is a common place on our roads of life, each of us arrived from a different path, and each of us will leave on a different path. And as we study the landscape of the forest in which we live, it is the climate that will provide the opportunity for growth. With adequate space and proper nourishment, in time we shall all grow.



Fred Martinez *teaches human development with a holistic perspective. One of these courses has been team-taught with a psychology professor and focuses on stress management. In addition, he advises students on their course selection and counsels them on personal issues. Fred is on the board of the Pastoral Counseling and Education Center in Dallas and is a participant in the pilot of a two-year teacher formation project in Dallas. His background includes the study of theology, cultures, and counseling.*

DAT'S STORY
Fred Martinez

At times it is easy to lose sight of the fact that our students have lives outside the classroom. Sometimes I forget that many stories and histories are in my classrooms. This is one such story permanently etched in my memory.

It was a class that began like many others that semester but what transpired in the course of the morning remains with me to this day. The class was in human development, dealing with issues surrounding interpersonal relationships. Topics included defense mechanisms, perception checking, "I" statements, and the like. Students in the class included some interested in psychology or counseling, others bettering their "getting-along-with-folks" skills, and some still trying to figure out the American culture and its rules.

Among the latter group was a Vietnamese student who was usually very quiet. He contributed at the appropriate times if cajoled a bit and was always pleasant with a friendly smile and warm greeting. But another side was soon to express itself.

As the class began, the topic introduced and conversation barely started, Dat (fictitious name) interrupted and did not give up the floor until he was finished. This was very unlike him. His countenance and demeanor reflected a different Dat this morning. It seemed that something weighed heavily upon him. He proceeded to tell us his story. He began by rapidly and very animatedly telling us through his tears that Vietnam had been his home. He left the country when the Viet Cong invaded the south and his homeland was occupied.

The details of how this event took place follow. Dat and his family–mother father, and little sister–were rounded up, along with all the other inhabitants of his village, and herded around a large, wide, deep hole in the ground. One by one, the terrified villagers were summarily shot by soldiers and either fell or were pushed into what had become a mass grave. The lifeless bodies plopped on top of each other. Dat did not die but assumed everyone else in the hole had. He "played dead" and waited until it got dark before he moved, afraid the soldiers would come back and finish the job.

As it grew dark, he began to crawl over the limp, motionless bodies–among whom he knew were his mother, father and sister. He pulled himself up the dirt walls and out of the pit, but he was about to find out he was not alone. Among the still bodies, someone else was moving. To his great surprise and joy, he discovered it was his little

sister! He could hardly believe his eyes. She too had survived, and he pulled her out of the pit. He went on to tell us how the two of them moved quickly and quietly in the dark of the night. They tried to get as far away from the hole as they could. He could not recall how long they ran–it might have been days. He did recall, however, being extremely hungry and thirsty when they finally came upon something edible–a beehive with honey. His little sister ran ahead of him. Arriving first at the beehive, she shoved both hands into it and began scooping honey into her mouth. Almost immediately, the bees attacked her body. Dat moved as rapidly as he could to help her, but there was little he could do. Without the proper medical attention, she died very quickly.

Dat proceeded to tell us how he almost went crazy. The death of his parents, the joy in finding his sister alive and then losing her again so tragically sent him into a deep depression. His eventual arrival in the United States offered him the opportunity for help in sorting out his feelings. In time and with therapy, he began to change his way of thinking. He decided that he would either have to die himself or decide to live. He decided to live. He began taking on a new attitude of gratefulness for his own life and smiled and interacted joyfully with anyone he encountered. No one would ever be able to tell what he had gone through. He did his best to get beyond his tragic past. His new approach seemed to be working, and he appeared high on life.

Just as he had wanted, not many people knew Dat's story. His co-workers didn't, and they made fun of his carefree attitude. Since they could not understand his joy, smiles, and laughter, they accused him of using drugs. The accusations were flung around often enough that he was eventually called in to his boss's office. He was forced to answer questions and undergo drug testing. Hadn't he gone through enough "hell" in his life already? It was almost too much for him to bear. Once again, his life was in turmoil.

I will never forget this story. I don't believe the students present that day will either. Dat finished his story, got up, and left. I guess I was in shock. I didn't get up and try to stop him from leaving. I didn't try to follow him. I didn't do anything. I may have missed an opportunity to "do something," but I'll never know. Dat did not return to class nor back to school and dropped all of his classes. I don't know what became of his job situation. This is part of the unfinished business in my life, and it has never had closure.

After Dat left the room, the rest of the class and I just sat there for a while. No one said anything. Finally the silence was broken, and we began going over what Dat had just revealed to us about his life–past

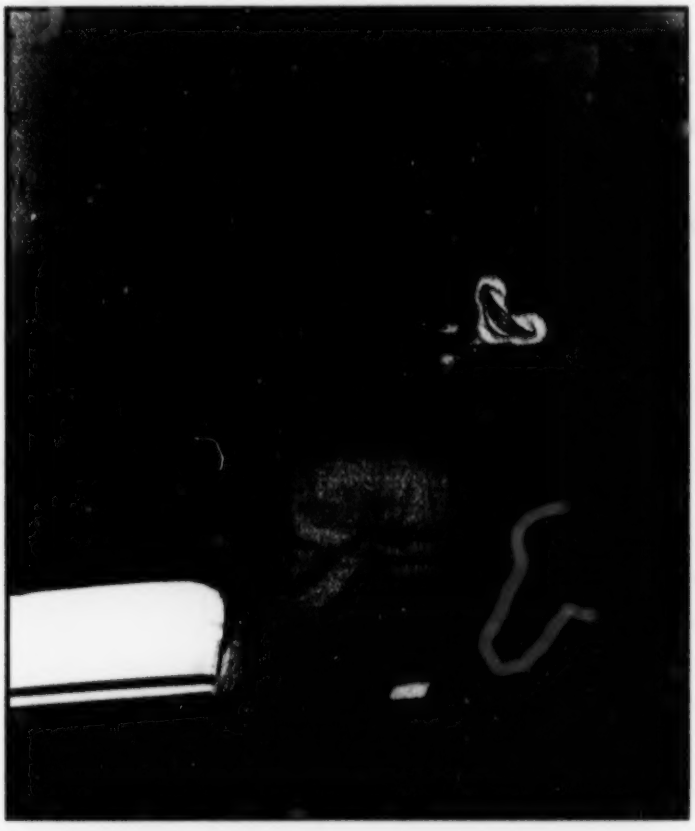
and present. We were amazed that someone could carry around that history and function as beautifully as he had appeared to. We spent the rest of the class and then some processing what we had just experienced. One of the students had made a connection with Dat and called to check on him. He confirmed Dat dropped all his classes, and it was unclear at the time what might happen to him at work. Dat knew he was not using drugs but did not know if he could continue to work in an environment that had forced him to dredge up his past.

We never knew if this story had a happy ending. Personally, and as a class, we were no longer the same people who had begun the semester a few weeks earlier. We began to look beneath the surface, not only of our gentle, smiling storyteller, but also within ourselves and one another. What stories did each of us hold that we had not shared or perhaps even examined ourselves? Being aware of my story has aided me immensely as I go through my journey in life. Just understanding it a little better as I go along has brought healing to my inner being. Sometimes it has helped me move forward where I have been stuck.

Our students bring an "inner landscape" into the classroom as well. They learn from "who they are." I am aware that sometimes this is a huge task since I have been privileged to hear some of their stories. As a counselor and teacher, I have listened to students' stories in journals, class presentations, papers, and crisis situations. It is amazing to see the relief that begins to replace the burden when the story is explored and the healing begins. Whether I choose to deal with these stories in the classroom or not, I believe it is important that I always be aware that they do exist. Our students do not live in a vacuum. As much as we would like them to focus on only our institution and our class, this is unrealistic. They are much more than bodies occupying chairs.

After hearing Dat's story, the class and I seemed to honor each other a little more. We saw each other through different eyes. He had helped us do that by painfully revealing himself to us. I still sometimes forget what a powerful lesson Dat taught me about my students and about what might lie beneath the facade. It is good for me occasionally to refresh my memory, to put myself back in that time and space. I then remember what an awesome privilege it is to share that sacred space called the classroom with my students. I feel honored and grateful for the experience.

Thank you, Dat, for reminding me.



***Dru Bookout** teaches speech communication and believes that the ability to communicate effectively affects the quality of life. Three years ago, she developed a fundamental speech course for the mind-body health program that examines the connection between humor and communication. Dru encourages laughter and play in the classroom, knowing it builds healthy relationships, promotes teamwork, and sparks creativity. She actively includes mind-body health principles and service learning in all of her courses.*

WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS MY NAME

Dru Bookout

Cheers is the name of a bar. It's actually a real bar in Boston. It's also the name of a TV sitcom now in reruns. The theme song of this popular show has a familiar phrase: "a place where everybody knows your name." The song is fitting because the show is based on the daily interactions of the regular customers who meet in a familiar, comfortable place and reveal their universal human idiosyncrasies. The TV audience laughs as they recognize themselves in similar situations. Now, I certainly don't advocate a barroom atmosphere in my classroom, but I do want my space to be one "where everybody knows my name." And as the song continues, "they're always glad I came." I want to connect with each student, and I want all my students to connect with their classmates, know each other by name, and recognize that we all share common fears, experiences, interests, values, and needs. I want my space to be a safe place, with a sense of community, where learning and growth can occur.

I teach Speech Communication at Richland College. It is a course that many students fear. If given a choice, they would rather be in the dentist's chair undergoing a root canal. That fear is normal. On some lists, the fear of public speaking ranks as the #1 fear, above spiders and jumping off tall buildings, even above death! Knowing this, I feel it is critical that my classroom must be a safe place where students can face their fears and be willing to take risks. My goal is to teach students to recognize their fears and help them acquire skills to become competent communicators. This can only happen in an affirming atmosphere.

One of the simplest ways we affirm one another is learning someone's name. Calling someone by name suggests we value him or her. It shows we took the time to listen and remember. This makes the other person feel important, like they made an impression. It also reflects positively on the speaker. We think, "Hmmm, that's one smart person. They are certainly good judges of character to remember me! I am worth remembering!"

When I was in college, I was in a theatrical production of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. I played the part of Mr. Mole. My most memorable event in this production occurred at the end of one performance. A friend, Sara, brought her little girl, Claudia, to see the play. At the end of the show, all of the characters went out into the audience to talk to the children and give out autographs. I saw Sara holding Claudia's hand. I swaggered over, and in my best Mr. Mole

character, loudly proclaimed, "This must be Claudia!" Wide-eyed, Claudia smiled and handed me her program, so that I could autograph it. I felt like a real star. She was clearly thrilled. The next day, Sara told me that when Claudia got home, she jumped out of the car, raced into the house, and with great excitement said, "Daddy, Mr. Mole knew my name!"

I don't think my students feel the same excitement when I call them by name, but I do know it makes a difference in the overall climate of my class. I think the first step in creating an affirming climate is learning students' names. It does take effort. I have a full load of five classes with 25 students in each class. I also typically have several students with the same name such as Amy, Jeff, and Jennifer. Also, our campus has a growing multicultural student body. So, I am learning many new names as well, such as Phong, Phuong, Atakilty, and Trihn. Learning names can be challenging, but I've discovered that I can learn their names the first week of classes if I "stop, look, and listen." I first must stop thinking about other things. I must look at them. And finally, I must truly *listen*. I must listen with 100 percent attention. I have several memory tricks that help. First, I see if they "look" like their names or if they have the same name as someone I know. If so, I just imagine the two standing by each other. We often play a name game where students introduce themselves with an adjective or phrase, often alliterated, that fits their personality. This results in "Cool Kevin, Tony Baloney, or Hong Kong Phong." Names are repeated several times before the game is completed. It is time consuming but valuable in allowing the class and me to learn names quickly.

I want students to know my name. I give them the following options: *Dru, Mrs. Bookout,* or *Your Highness*. The last option usually gets a laugh. I encourage students to try out which feels most comfortable to them, assuring them that I'm okay with whichever name they choose to call me. It's amazing to me that some students never learn their teachers' names. I have asked students what instructor they have for a particular course. It's not unusual for them to look at me with a blank face and admit they don't know their teacher's name! As a member of our class community, I want students to know my name.

It's also important for students to discover commonalties. We have a mock cocktail party where students chit chat and look for things they have in common. Students often discover they attended the same elementary school or high school and have common acquaintances. They connect when they find out that they both have the same passion for music or sports. I also participate in the party, sharing information

about myself, and I discover common interests with students. I think this is a perfect assignment since the Latin derivative of communication is *communicare*, which means, "to make common."

The nature of Speech Communication lends itself to many opportunities for students to share their experiences. Early in the semester, students deliver a short speech sharing a personal experience. They tell about trips, embarrassing situations, and traumatic experiences. These stories are often funny and many times sad. It is my favorite assignment because it is at this point that the class begins really to bond. As Minh (fictitious student names) softly describes his childhood experience of escaping from Vietnam, American students strain to hear each word as they imagine his fear. They listen with compassion and begin to develop empathy. For many, this is the first time they can hear first-hand about history they have only heard about from their parents or in classes. They realize that we come together from many different life experiences. Students begin to ask about an absent classmate. They participate in class discussions, no longer afraid of the unknown, of being judged or attacked. They affirm one another with positive feedback. These stories serve as a frame of reference for discussion and examples to support new concepts.

For example, one student, Lynn, told about an embarrassing experience she had when trying to "flirt with some cute boys while shopping at Wal-Mart." She had just finished her laundry, put on her favorite fleecy sweater still warm from the dryer, and had rushed to the store to buy some last minute items. When she saw the young men in the store, she noticed how they looked at her and smiled. In fact, she shared, "They seemed very interested in me and made several obvious trips down the same shopping aisle. I was flattered. It wasn't until I was checking out of the store that the cashier told me that I had a pair of underwear stuck to the back of my sweater!" The class thoroughly enjoyed this story. We particularly liked it because Lynn was able to laugh at herself. Peg's story of her senior year in high school, being an unwed mother, opened up much discussion about stress, the unknown, and the future. With each story, we begin to connect on a deeper level.

I contribute my own stories as well. Students are surprised to discover that I share my home with my husband, two college-age children, my 75-year-old mother, and 91-year-old mother-in-law. When I told my class about the day my mother accidentally drove through the garage and into the house, they realized that I, too, know about stress. I also share my stories of fear and loss, describing my father-in-

law's battle with Lou Gehrig's disease. They have seen tears roll down my face when I remember his struggle to communicate with us. His mind was clear and active, but his body no longer functioned. These stories make us real. When describing good teachers, Parker Palmer says, "Good teachers share one trait: a strong sense of personal identity infuses their work." Sharing myself in the classroom feels right. It suits my subject and seems to decrease the distance between my students and me.

After a recent group activity, one student turned in a form to evaluate the members of her group. She wrote:

Everyone "lost it" at some point in each category. However, we all had a semester of bonding behind us and with your pep talk, we found compassion for our fellow group members. Acceptance and actual care for each other and our different personal situations made our group even closer. Therefore, I'm grading everyone "excellent." We all have faults but can now look back, laugh, and know our project was well done!

Taking the time to learn students' names and providing opportunities for them to share is a simple way to bridge the barrier that often separates teachers from students and students from each other. Several years ago, I had a college baseball player in my class. He was a very smart young man and a gifted athlete. At the end of the semester, he asked me if I would write a letter of recommendation for him. He was applying for a scholarship to a university. I wrote the letter and left it in my mailbox for him to collect. He sent me a thank you note that I will never forget. He thanked me for writing the letter and told me how much he had enjoyed speech class. He then said, "The main reason I asked you to write this letter for me is because you are the only teacher who called me by my name."

***Elaine Sullivan** (standing) works with autobiographical writing as a key to understanding mind-body health in her human development classes and has co-taught a writing for wellness course as part of Richland College's mind-body health curriculum. Since her early retirement, Elaine has worked extensively in colleges, hospitals, and corporations as a keynote speaker and a facilitator of workshops. She is a founding board member of the National Community College Wellness Conference and is on the board of directors of the National Wellness Conference. Elaine is also one of the facilitators in Parker Palmer's Courage to Teach program.*

A STAINED GLASS DESIGN
Elaine Sullivan

Kendra (fictitious name), a 50-year-old student who began her first experience in college by enrolling in my human development class in autobiography, wrote in her journal:

A Stained Glass Design

The chains fall daily from years of pain
Shame that isolated from touch;
Secrets I hid – my unworthiness they proved
But, Oh, how I wanted you to see –
This wonderful person I know as me.

A sweet little girl – well liked by all
Then confusion became all that I saw
I struggled in vain – tried harder to please –
Always your approval I need
I wanted to be with you – to laugh and to play
It hurt so much to be turned away.

Am I visible – can you hear me – can you see?
My needs I will learn to make fade away
Perfect I'll be
I'll take care of you and be what you need
Seems a small price to pay
Ignoring my feelings, hiding my grief.

Kendra's poem demonstrates the loss of her authentic self, the awareness of how she adapted in order to be loved, to receive approval, and to survive. Her title, *A Stained Glass Design*, was part of the metaphor woven throughout her story writing.

As I work to invite students to deepen their stories, I am influenced by the work of John Fox, author of *Finding What You Didn't Lose*. Slowly I have become more aware of the power in metaphor. Parker Palmer's teacher formation work focuses on poetry and story as a way to deepen the inner life. In each poem, in each story, in each metaphor he uses, Palmer asks, "What does this poem, story, or metaphor evoke in me that is worth tending to?"

Today the use of metaphor and deep listening has become central to my work with student stories. Fox states, "The making of metaphor opens a window where the inner and outer aspects of our lives can join. The metaphoric voice contains the threads that join mind and soul, self and others, self and the natural world, self and God. What once seemed separate is revealed to be made of one fabric."

Students bring objects representing some metaphor to class to share, and these immediately begin the art of making connections. To strengthen the metaphor, I use a roll of yarn. As the student describes the metaphor, often with deep emotion, he or she holds the yarn and when finished, tosses it to another student so that at completion, a web has been formed. This web is carefully placed on the floor over the objects–a visual metaphor for the deep connections being formed in our class. The students then write down each metaphor to reflect on out of class.

During the following week, students write in prose or poetry how they related to the metaphors in the collage through a series of questions: Did one evoke something in you? Did one connect deeply with your life? Did you see something different for yourself in the metaphor? Which metaphors did you choose to attend to? In the next class, students are invited, first in a large group and then in smaller groups, to share either their prose or poetry. Again I stress learning to listen without judgment, shame, blame, or criticism with no giving of advice. I encourage silence as students take time to hold in their hearts what is being shared. The connection they make with each other's metaphors deepens the trust, and the web of connections is strengthened. At the close of these two three-hour classes, a great bond is established, a safe space has begun and the process of story work and communication continues. Kendra began making special connections with students who related to her shattered glass–students who named their losses, pains, and possibilities.

Each week students read a common shared story from *Out of the Skin – Into the Soul*, a book on human development using metaphors from children's stories. Stories like "The House of Hermit the Crab," who constantly outgrows his shell, are metaphors used to distill the patterns in their stories. An excerpt from Kendra's journal from the story of Hermit the Crab is an excellent example:

In making and following my own decisions, I was met with opposition and manipulation. Combined with my own negative messages of unworthiness and inadequacy, I felt caught between two worlds. The lure of the old, familiar

and predictable shells was present and the unknown waters to the new shell uncertain. I stood by the choices I made and am searching for the right shell. Part of my enrolling in this class is to explore my options.

As students begin writing their autobiographies, I encourage them to use metaphoric images with another set of questions: "What metaphor might best describe how you saw your father or mother when you were a child? Now? What metaphor might best describe your first year in school?" Their perceptions, their memories, their patterns begin to take on a new meaning. Metaphor deepens the process of recognition and connection. It stokes the fire of the creative self that was often laid waste by the rigid rules and regulations of early education. Playing with the metaphor, using imagination, and telling stories opens the heart.

In the mind-body health field we hear from experts that we are living in the time of the healing of the heart. Parker Palmer defines heart in the ancient sense: "the heart is where the intellect and emotions, will, and spirit converge." His work challenges me to encourage students to seek the richness of heart work, finding and seeking balance between heart and head, intellect and emotions.

Throughout the course, metaphors arise in poetry and prose. One particular feedback exercise using metaphors offers profound learning possibilities. Close to the end of the semester, each student chooses a category in which he or she wishes feedback from other students. Categories may include such groupings as books, trees, animals, weather, or songs. If Kendra chose trees, for example, each student would reflect on what particular tree would best describe her and would write in poetry or prose an extended metaphor that elaborated on the choice. The feedback says much about the giver as well as the receiver.

One student received feedback in terms of the body. Through the eyes of her classmates, she was seen as the heart, the feet, the hands, the eyes. That evening she asked her children for the same feedback. Her eleven year old daughter said, "Mother, you are an ovary." "What do you mean?" she asked. "You only let your child out about once a month," the child answered. This feedback changed this woman's life forever. She rediscovered her playful side. Metaphors in the exercise help the student who gives and the student who receives and deepens the connection between their inner and outer worlds resulting in new insights, new possibilities, new wonder.

Using metaphors to help students deepen their stories often invites them to look at the paradoxes of their lives: strengths and weaknesses, loneliness and connections, shadow and light, freedom and

responsibility, limitations and possibilities. They begin to question and to learn to live without answers. Their either/or thinking is stretched into the realization that paradox is an essential part of maturity. An entry in Kendra's journal reveals her discovery:

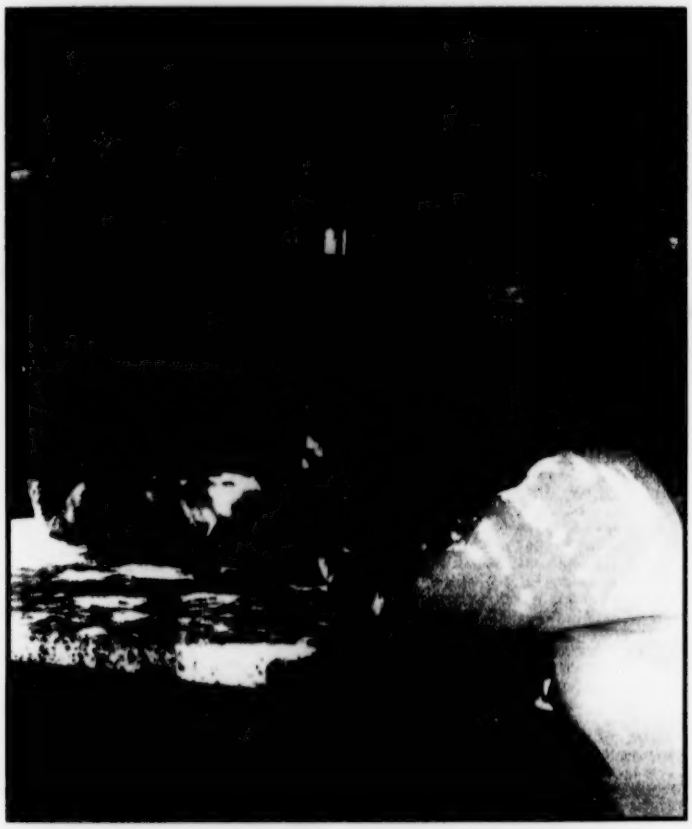
In the difficulty of embracing and accepting the shadow of our life and personality, it may be the weight of this sack we daily tote that first gets our attention. Inspection of its contents can reveal an array of items we think safely hidden and causing no harm . . . giving responsibility back to its owner, letting the items go, asking for or extending forgiveness, dealing with others in a healthier manner and learning to treat ourselves with love and respect becomes the challenge we face. As each concealment is brought into the healing light, we draw closer to our hidden treasures within our shadow side.

Through many hours of journal writing, story work, sharing, listening, and giving and receiving feedback, Kendra completed her reflections on the patterns of her story:

They are all pieces of the stained glass art I originally used as a metaphor. We are all wounded–with just different severity. We can all be wounded healers. These broken pieces–this one for CP, this one for ADD, this one for brokenness, together are even more solid than in its original form. When the light shines through stained glass, the brilliance far surpasses the original form. What will the finished design of this piece of art look like? What can I accomplish in the future? How do I use this first half of my life in the second half? I have so many gifts and talents–undeveloped. What if this is always the way it was MEANT to be? What if I did accept this assignment? Only time will tell.

What once seemed separate in Kendra's life became one fabric as revealed in the last stanza of her poem:

There was no intent aimed to wound; forgiveness applied
With grace, broken pieces are placed by the Artist Divine
With love and mercy remolding each scar
Light will shine–reflecting through this stained glass design
So others can meet–this incredible person I know as me.



***Scott Branks del Llano** (left) teaches English and American culture for non-native speakers of English. He has developed specialized curricula in oral communication skills and intercultural communication and helped create the American English and Culture Institute for intensive English language learners. Over the past few years, he has worked closely with international students, refugees, and new immigrants both as a counselor and teacher assisting students with cultural integration and skill development. Having lived and traveled in various countries, Scott works to create new opportunities for global interchange.*

THE FACES OF PEACE

Scott Branks del Llano

Every time another war breaks out, I find myself pulling out my *Hair*, Joan Baez, and Bruce Cockburn albums in a sort of recreational and nostalgic passive protest. It helps me cope. At six years old, as the Age of Aquarius was dawning and for many years to follow, I genuinely believed that "peace would guide the planets and love would steer the stars." Our earth's course has diverged a bit since then, but I still find myself a relentless peace-seeker. It is one thing that has remained consistent in me. So it seems natural that I now work with international students, new immigrants, and refugees from virtually every corner of the planet. For many years the lessons of harmony, understanding, and peace have been at the heart of my interaction with these students.

The teacher formation work of Parker Palmer, the Fetzer Institute, and the community at Richland College holds at its core the vital importance of deep inner exploration and the emergence of the authentic self in teaching and learning. One exercise, which has become a daily ritual for me, is a centering guided meditation. For years I have loved the peace prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi. It resonates with my inner desires for my teaching and the work of cultural exchange to be an "instrument of peace." When I am able, I enter my classroom and sit quietly to speak this prayer to myself as the students hurry in bringing with them their anxiety, discoveries, homesickness, and dreams. I ask the students to spend some reflective time, often using music or silence.

A magical transformation unfolds within the silence and slowed pace. The students find a space and a freedom in which to openly and honestly voice their stories, a process demonstrating the value of allowing those issues that really move us all to become a part of our class time. The moments that strike me as the most poignant teaching/learning encounters are really those that humbled and silenced me as a teacher and demanded attentive listening to the students. The stories that have emerged are profound lessons in the depth of human connection and understanding. It is these stories of courage and hope over the years that embody the truths within this simple peace prayer and lead to the very face of peace.

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. . .
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Ahmad (fictitious names used throughout) was a young engineering student from Iraq whose immense courage and grace moved hundreds of those around him. I remember with chilling clarity the night I had to pull him from class to inform him that his home city of Baghdad was being bombed. For weeks, he had no way of knowing how or where his parents were. In the midst of his pain, he decided to share his struggle very openly with the campus. To many individuals who only saw the Gulf War as a sort of televised video game of strategically guided "smart" bombs, Ahmad brought a startling heart and soul to the war. For those to whom Iraq was a hated enemy nation of maniacal Saddam Husseins, Ahmad brought quite another face to mind. The more he shared, the more others broke down their own barriers to turn a face toward peace. Ahmad was their good friend, and their love for him transformed blind hatred.

Where there is injury, pardon;

Lily, a student from Bosnia, was learning English. Her oral communications class was a giant challenge for her as she faced her terror of speaking before a group. Paramount in this fear was the obstacle of having no arms; an exploding shell during the war in Bosnia had blown them off. As she braved her first speech, an overwhelming radiance and the powerful expression of her face, eyes, and voice replaced Lily's nervousness. She delivered her message with great conviction and strength. The speech peer-evaluation forms contain the category of effective expression through gestures and nonverbal communication. I could sense her classmates squirming to give appropriate feedback when one of them suddenly blurted out that Lily didn't even need hand gestures because her eyes and face spoke with such unbelievable expression. Exactly! Tears and raucous applause ensued. A very gracious healing had occurred for all of us, especially for Lily.

Where there is doubt, faith;

Ismael was not sure if he would be able to fulfill his dream of completing a degree in computer science. Political and economic chaos was threatening his family who struggled to support him from El Salvador. Despite his constant preoccupation with his family's safety and his own fight to make ends meet through long hours of extra work,

Ismael maintained a 4.0 grade average and won competitive scholarships to support his learning. Within a year, he was teaching computer skills to Spanish speakers in the community, and computer agencies began to pursue him for his expertise and bilingual skills. Never losing his belief that he would succeed, Ismael graduated from a prestigious university this year.

Where there is despair, hope;

Andre walked into my office and into my life one day and has remained forever a hero of mine. His entire family was killed during the senseless and bloody massacres in Rwanda. Andre, on a student visa, was left totally on his own, as his family was his only source of support for his studies in the U.S. He had no home or country to return to as his tribe, the Tutsi, had become the tragic victims of genocide. As Andre revealed his story, the entire community came to his aid with free housing, legal assistance to secure temporary protected status, a scholarship fund in his name that within weeks covered his entire year's tuition, and a network of friends and supporters to hold Andre during the gruesome months of pain that followed. Andre gained permanent residency, completed his studies, and went on to graduate school bolstered by his profound inner strength and a community that cared deeply for him.

Where there is darkness, light;

The student stories are numerous and poignant. Anh from Vietnam supports her entire family, none of whom knows English. She goes home from class each night to teach them all she learns and manages the family restaurant. Katia from Belgrade, Yugoslavia, feared for her family every day during the war, but she never missed a class or an assignment. Her classmates rallied around her every day with their compassion and concern. They have become her family. These are the stories of hundreds, thousands of students every day whose lives touch and illuminate our own paths to understanding. They are stories of great courage, of misplaced lives, the struggle to fit in, the horror of war and economic ruin, and the need for healing human connection.

Where there is sadness, joy.

I came to the United States when I was 17 and, like many of my students, struggled with my own marginality and cultural adjustment.

I lost two homes to civil unrest and the political upheaval and violence in Colombia, my homeland. Several of my friends and mentors were kidnapped and some killed by guerrilla groups seeking to gain power. Others were lost to the lure of drug trafficking. My family was finally forced to evacuate. For years I have anguished to find a place to call home. The core of joy and hope in my heart was gravely threatened, and I could not find a way to peace or wholeness. I owe a huge debt to my students who have helped me see that the very thing I feared–revealing my story–was the vehicle for healing. For years I had witnessed this raw and open honesty of personal story at work and its transforming power. Playing the advocate and healer of my students' collective tragic story had allowed me to bury my own heartache and take on theirs. Terrified to dive inward and do the deep soul work I needed to do, I was afraid that I would break apart.

For it is in giving that we receive.

Ahmad, Lily, Ismael, Andre and countless other students courageously moved into their own intense pain and entrusted it to the hands and hearts of others, and in so doing, found a miraculous peace. My epiphany finally hit through the gracious example of my students when I discovered the unmistakable connection between their stories and my own. I now find day-to-day teaching is a place for the truly genuine, a place to reach healing in solidarity with the whole frail human condition. As Parker Palmer puts it, "Bad teachers distance themselves from their subjects and students," while good teachers "join self and subject and students in the fabric of life." Without students truly knowing me, how can there be community? Parker also states that knowing is always communal. "Community is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace, the flowing of personal identity and integrity into the work of relationships. Only as we are in community with ourselves can we find community with others." The students embody this communion for me and have become an integral part of my path toward healing.

I am still passionate about peace. The lives of my students daily bring me face-to-face with a world desperately in need of it. Finding the courage to offer up our own stories and to expose our pain, joy, and tears brings great healing and true peace. As Saint Francis' prayer states, in giving we receive. Giving of ourselves. Eventually the divergent patterns of our lives combine in a full integration of body, mind, and spirit, and the ironies begin to make sense. At times

we do a lot of splashing on the surface, then we are forced to surrender, dive deep down into our inner ocean, and find a quintessential stability there. It is a sacred space. As I look deeply into the faces of so many others seeking this same peace, I see the diverse patterns of unique experience and intense struggle align into a common light, and I suddenly recognize my own face staring back at me, calling me to peace.

FETZER INSTITUTE

The **Fetzer Institute** is a nonprofit private operating foundation that supports research, education, and service programs exploring the integral relationships among body, mind, and spirit. It has a special interest in how individuals and communities are influenced by the interactions among the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of life, and how understandings in these areas can improve health, foster growth, and better the human condition.

Since 1994, the Fetzer Institute has sponsored formation retreats for various professionals to examine the forces that form and de-form their lives in order to find ways of recovering the inner wholeness from which their best work comes. One series of retreats that has proven particularly successful, has been *The Courage to Teach* program. This two-year series of quarterly retreats is designed for public school teachers. The retreats are offered at four locations around the country: Maryland-Washington, D.C. area, Michigan, South Carolina, and Washington. In 1998, the Center for Teacher Formation (www.teacherformation.org) was established on Bainbridge Island, Washington, and can be reached at (888) 849-4889.

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